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[No. 286]

The Modern Conception of Prayer

BY

JOHN HAYNES HOLMES

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The American Unitarian Association was Founded in 1825 with the Following Expressed Purpose

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*The General Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, passed the following vote at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man."

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

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THE MODERN CONCEPTION OF PRAYER

TEXT: "Lord, teach us how to pray."—*Luke II: I.*

It needs no great amount of argument upon my part this morning, I imagine, to point out the fact that, during the last generation or so, a great change has gradually been coming over our ideals and practices of public and private prayer. In the old days, prayer was the simplest, easiest, most natural, and most commonplace expression of religion. In its spontaneous observance on all occasions of individual and social life, it seemed to be something almost in the nature of an instinct. Men prayed as naturally and inevitably as they breathed, and sometimes, I imagine it must be confessed, with as little thought. But always, in the great moments of experience, however it may have been at ordinary times, the utterance of prayer was a sincere and heartfelt expression of the soul. It was the one avenue by which religion was enabled to enter freely and fully into the daily lives of individual men and women; and the one way, also, in which religion again and again seized upon the race and molded its destinies to abiding good or ill. Prayer, in other words, has been a real thing in the past. The great men of the world have been men of prayer, and the great movements in the evolution of humanity have been initiated and accompanied by prayer.

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But all this now is wholly changed. It has long since become a truism, has it not, that men do not pray as they did formerly, and that our age is no longer, therefore, an age of prayer. Family prayers, which were once a practically universal custom in Christian households, are now so exceptional as to be conspicuous. Many of us are trying, partly out of reverence for tradition, and partly because we trust our intuitions more than our intellectual convictions, to teach our children to pray in the old, familiar, simple way, but how many of us can truly say that we continue the practice ourselves? Now and then, to be sure, there come moments of bitter trial and sore distress, when the old instinct revives and it seems as though nothing but prayer can appease the agony of the mind or satisfy the longings of the soul —but how many of us find it easy, even on such occasions, to take the posture and speak the words of divine petition? And what is true here in our individual experience is true also in our associated life. Prayer meetings have disappeared from many even of our most orthodox churches, and where they still survive they show every evidence of decay. We still maintain unimpaired the order of prayer in the services of public worship in our churches, but more than one right-minded person has confessed to me that he finds it "a bore," and the hour at which most people arrive in their pews would seem to indicate that they do not regard the opening portions of the service as very important. And, in the same way, we still go through the performance of invoking the blessing of

God upon our public gatherings of all descriptions. Nobody would think of such a thing, for example, as opening a political convention or a legislative session without the regular prayer of the duly appointed chaplain. But is it not significant of the temper of our age that the one clergyman at the recent Baltimore convention who had the "good sense," as we were told, to make his prayer short, was rewarded with a burst of applause so hearty and spontaneous that it was made a subject of newspaper comment throughout the land; and that when it was moved the other day, in the United States Senate, that the prayers of the retiring chaplain be gathered and printed in a volume for permanent record, the motion was defeated on the ground that so few of the honorable Senators had ever been present to hear the prayers, it was not worth while to preserve them? The fact of the matter is—try to disguise it as we may with our pretentious hypocrisies and our easy shams!—we are no longer taking the practice of prayer very seriously. We are finding it more and more difficult to reconcile the idea of prayer with the new scientific and philosophic knowledge of our time. Deep down in our hearts we are cherishing certain very definite doubts of the efficacy of prayer, and thus, as a natural consequence, gradually allowing its observance, both public and private, to fall into neglect. Whether we like it or not, whether it is a healthy sign or not, it would still seem to be true that the age of prayer is closed forever, and the men of prayer are the heroes of an elder day.

In order to understand this remarkable change in the religious experience and habit of the race, it is necessary to consider for a few moments some of the objections to prayer which have arisen in our time, and which have done more than anything else to bring about this transformation of which I have been speaking.

In the first place, we find it difficult to-day to believe that the affairs of men here upon the earth are of such large importance in the eyes of God that he has nothing more important to do than to listen to our complaints and give answer to our petitions. It was easy to believe that God was heeding our prayers when the earth was regarded as the center of the universe, and the salvation of men's souls the central problem of cosmic history. But it is not easy to cherish this belief when we stand confronted by the vast reaches of the universe which have been unfolded before our gaze by the researches of modern science. Here are the heavenly spaces all about us, stretching out so many millions of miles in every direction that the mind of man is unable to comprehend their magnitude, and our little planet one of the smallest and least important of the unnumbered stars by which they are everywhere illumined. Consider, if you will, the great ocean which rolls between this shore and the continent of Europe; imagine in the midst of that ocean a little piece of seaweed floating upon its waves; and you will have a very exaggerated idea of the importance of this earth from the standpoint of the surrounding universe. Then imagine that this

seaweed is peopled by myriads of infinitesimal creatures; ask yourselves of how much importance these little animals are from the standpoint of the world-problems with which you and I are concerned; and you will have some conception, perhaps, of how large the affairs of man must appear in the cosmic vision of God. The extent of the universe in space and time, which has been discovered and explored by the great sciences of our day, is so enormous that man has shrunken to a position of utter insignificance, and, in the face of this result, it is difficult indeed to believe that God can be very much concerned with the petty desires and aspirations of our individual lives.

In the second place, the old conception of prayer has been discredited by what we know as "the universality of natural law." We know to-day, if we know anything at all, that this vast material universe is controlled throughout by unchanging and unchangeable laws. There is no remotest corner of all the immeasurable infinities of space, and no briefest fraction of a second in all the unending eternities of time, which are subject to disorder, or even momentary interference from without, but all things, in the most distant star in the heavens as on this whirling earth, and in the earliest moment of cosmic history as at this latest moment of recorded time, are subject to the unvarying and perfect uniformity of law. When this great fact was first revealed to the world, it was believed for a time that it meant the elimination of God from the universe, and the establishment of the philosophy of atheism. Now, however, we have come

to see that there is nothing essentially irreconcilable between the thought of God and the thought of a universe which is always moving in accordance with unvarying law. On the contrary, this natural law, of which we speak, is not to be regarded as alien to God at all, but only as something which marks the uniform channels of activity into which God is directing the impulses of his creative energy. There are various ways of explaining this relationship between the life of God upon the one hand and the reign of law upon the other. John Fiske tells us that a natural law is nothing more nor less than the statement of the particular way in which God always chooses to act. When we discover the operation of some natural law, as Kepler discovered the law of planetary motion, or Newton the law of gravitation, or Spencer the law of evolution, we are simply discovering the principle to which God has decided to conform his life; and when we formulate these laws into a system and declare that this system marks the uniform procedure of natural forces, we are simply telling the way in which God "lives and moves and has his being." God can only act in one way, says Fiske, because he is not whimsical or capricious but perfectly wise, and knows therefore just what he wants to do and just how he can do it. To ask him to reverse his constant method of action in any particular case is to ask him to reverse himself, and condemn himself. James Martineau has interpreted this fact in a somewhat different way. "The universality of law," he says, in one of the profoundest passages he

ever wrote, "is God's eternal act of self-limitation, or abstinence from the movements of free affection, for the sake of a constancy that shall never falter or deceive." M. Bergson comes to identically the same conclusion, but substitutes the element of compulsion for that of free choice. God, he says, is confronted, in his creative work, by certain definite conditions of reality, and he finds it necessary to conform to these conditions. This means that natural laws are nothing but the revelation of the adaptations which the spirit of life finds it necessary to make in its struggle with dead matter. We may explain this phenomenon, therefore, in one way, or we may explain it in another, but the cosmic fact remains always the same—that the laws of this universe are changeless, for the reason that God, from choice as most of us would put it, or from compulsion as I imagine Bergson would put it, is always moving along certain precise lines and working in a certain definite way. "God is the same yesterday, to-day, and forever! . . . With him is no variableness, neither shadow of turning!"

Now it is evident, is it not, that this principle of the uniformity of divine activity, founded upon the scientific demonstration of the universality of natural law, is fatal to the old idea of prayer. In what way can a spoken prayer, for example, so change the atmospheric conditions that a period of drought can be transformed into a period of rain? How can a verbal petition even to God so alter the physical conditions of seed and soil and nourishment as to change the barrenness of a famine-stricken country into the

full harvest of abundant crops? How is our prayer to change the laws of wind and wave in such fashion that the safety of a friend upon the seas can be assured? How can the prayers even of an entire nation achieve a victory upon the field of battle, or save a much-loved President from the consequences of an assassin's bullet? These are events which follow upon certain well-understood causes, and the sequence between cause and effect here, as everywhere else in the world of nature and of human affairs, is invariable. As well expect, by means of prayer, to swing a planet out of its appointed orbit, to bid the "mountains to be cast into the midst of the sea," or to destroy this earth and make it vanish into space, as by prayer to bring one drop of rain or one ray of sunshine from the skies, to stay the action of a raging storm, or to win a victory upon the field of battle.

Moving now from the field of science to the field of religion proper, we encounter a third difficulty in the way of the old idea of prayer. I refer to the fact that a prayer, which is devoted to instructing God as to our troubles and beseeching him for relief, would seem to imply a lack of faith in his omniscience on the one hand, and his beneficence upon the other. If we really trust in the wisdom and goodness of God, why, let me ask you, should we pray at all? Why should we not surrender ourselves absolutely to God's keeping, and rest there without petition of our own? God is wise, we say; then why should we ask him to send rain to end the drought, for surely he must know of its occurrence, and be permitting its continuance

for reasons which we know not of, but which are satisfactory to him? God is merciful; then why should we beseech him to guard us from some impending calamity, for he surely would not wantonly compass our destruction? God, we believe, "doth not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men"; then why should we pray him to save our loved ones from death upon the seas, for "surely he knoweth our frame, he remembereth that we are dust"? It is perfectly evident, is it not, that the old idea of prayer is absolutely inconsistent with our professed trust in the power and the goodness of God. Petitions that he will do this or will not do that show only that our trust in him is not as perfect as we would feign believe.

As a fourth objection to prayer, I would refer to the very practical difficulty that God could not answer prayer, even if he desired to do so, owing to the confusion of human wishes. Here are millions of men upon this planet, of different races and nationalities, of various habits and tastes and inclinations, with diversified interests and ambitions, oftentimes diametrically opposed in their hopes and aspirations, and yet all of them praying that God will do as they desire. The farmer wants rain for his crops, and the picnic party wants fair skies and warm sunshine. The schooner beating up the coast wants a wind from the southwest, and the schooner sailing down the coast wants a wind from the northeast. The Bulgarian wants victory to rest upon the cross, and the Turk upon the crescent. Which prayer shall God answer—how shall

he choose—to whom shall he give his favor? Was not Lincoln right when he pointed out in his Second Inaugural Address, "Both North and South pray to the same God, and each invokes his aid against the other. . . . The prayers of both could not be answered"?

Lastly, passing from the realm of theory to the realm of fact, there is that difficulty which has assailed so many devout and trusting hearts—namely, that if God heeds the prayers we speak, why does he not answer them more often. Many a believer who knows nothing of the speculative objections which we have been considering here this morning, has been led unwillingly from faith to doubt by the hard, cold fact that few prayers are ever really answered. We hear, every now and then, of wonderful things that have been accomplished by prayer; but very seldom do we hear of the things which prayer has failed to accomplish. And yet I venture to assert that for every one prayer which has seemed to be answered there have been thousands and tens of thousands of prayers which have manifestly not been answered. Think of how this entire nation united in one great prayer that the life of President McKinley might be spared, and then recall how that prayer was left unanswered! Think of the agonizing prayers which must have mounted heavenward from the deck of the *Titanic* as she slowly sank her great hulk beneath the icy waters of the Atlantic—and yet no answer! Think of the prayers that were spoken by a million sufferers in the flood-stricken regions of Indiana and

Ohio during the flood of 1913—and yet nothing was done to stay the mad progress of the waters! If God can answer prayer, then why, in the name of all that is merciful, did he turn a deaf ear to such pitiful entreaties as these? We do not need to theorize about this problem. In spite of occasional coincidences and marvels, we all of us know, as a plain matter of fact, that prayers are not answered; and this, I doubt not, has done more than anything else put together to discredit the idea, and end the practice, of public and private prayer.

Here, now, are the main objections which are being offered to-day to the idea of prayer, and which are standing in the way of the continued practice of prayer. And what, let me ask you, is to be said as to the validity of these objections?

In the first place, I believe that it must have impressed us all that every one of these objections to prayer is based upon a very definite and particular interpretation of the meaning of prayer. Behind all of these difficulties which I have named are the ideas that God, in his relation to the universe, is a great ruler or king, who, like an earthly sovereign, can do anything that he pleases within the borders of his dominions—that it is the business of men, if they want anything to come to pass in their own individual lives or in the world at large, to tell God what they want and try to persuade him to grant it—and that prayer is only the practical medium for conveying this information and persuasion to the ears of God. Prayer, in other words, from the point of view of

these objections alleged against it, is nothing more nor less than a petition addressed to God for the bestowal of earthly favors. It is a request upon the part of man that God relieve him of some evil, or reward him with some blessing—that God change the order of physical phenomena or interfere with the progress of human events, at some particular time, or in some particular place, for his own personal benefit. Nor is this an unfair or inaccurate interpretation, for certainly we must all of us admit that this is what the ordinary man in all ages has understood by prayer, and that this is the kind of prayer which has generally been offered in the past, and is still being offered to-day. Man has always had an unalterable conviction that, if he wanted anything special in this world, he would surely get it if he only prayed long enough and hard enough to God; and therefore have prayers, in the past, been one long succession of petitions for certain changes for the better in man's physical condition, in the material and social environment in which he has been living, and in the issue of the human events in which he has been involved. Thus men, as we have seen, have prayed for rain in a period of prolonged drought, for food in a time of famine, for safety in the hour of urgent danger. They have prayed that the sick might be made well, that those upon the sea, or in perilous places of storm and flood, might be protected from disaster, that victory might come upon the field of battle in time of war. Nor have prayers of this kind wholly ceased, even in this age of spiritual

indifference. Only a few years ago, at a time of serious drought in Kansas, the governor issued a proclamation, asking the ministers of the state to unite on a certain Sunday in prayer to God for rain. I have myself heard a minister pray during a great famine in India, that God would bring food to the hordes of that starving country, even as he sent the ravens to feed Elijah in the desert. At this very moment, in all the Christian churches of Bulgaria, Servia, Montenegro, and Greece, are prayers being spoken for the success of the allied armies of the cross in their struggle against the legions of the crescent. That God will interfere in some way with the course of natural or human events for the benefit of man, has been the burden of all the prayers of all the ages past. Thus it was that, when Prof. John Tyndall, in 1872, wished to assail the validity of prayer, and show his contempt for its observance, he offered his famous "test"—that two exactly similar wards of a hospital be filled respectively with an equal number of patients, afflicted with the same diseases, and, so far as possible, in the same general condition of depression or convalescence; that the one ward be placed in the hands of clergymen, and the patients treated by nothing but the prayers of these men for their recovery, and the other ward removed from all religious influences, and the patients treated by the best skill and knowledge of trained physicians; and that a careful record be kept, for purposes of comparison, of the deaths and recoveries in either ward. This is what prayer meant to Prof. Tyndale, and this was the way,

to his mind, to prove that it was nothing but a superstition.

Now it is against this particular conception of prayer as a petition addressed to God for interference with the orderly processes of natural phenomena, that these objections, which I have been discussing this morning, are all of them directed. And I believe that we must admit, in all frankness, that, from this point of view at least, these objections are every one of them unanswerable. It is the very general recognition of this fact which accounts for the sweeping changes which have come in our habit of prayer during the last two generations. We are convinced to-day that prayer, such as has been practiced for unnumbered centuries in the past, is literally of no avail. Tyndall was right when he challenged the church with his "prayer-test," and the church showed that it did not believe its own professions when it declined to pick up the gauntlet. We see clearly enough to-day, if we never saw it before, that there is only one kind of prayer that can effect anything in the physical world, and that is the prayer not of words but of deeds. The only prayer that can save a barren land from famine is the digging of irrigation canals. The only prayer that can save a storm-tossed ship upon the seas is the vigilance of the captain upon the bridge and the discipline of the crew upon the decks. The only prayer that can persuade God to bring victory upon the field of battle is the genius of the general in command and the perfect valor of the soldier in the ranks. Cromwell knew what he was doing when

he commanded his soldiers not only to pray but to keep their powder dry. Bayard Taylor was right when he said that "labor is the truest prayer." Emerson was only anticipating our most extreme modern thought upon this question, when he said, in his essay upon "Self-Reliance": "As soon as a man is at one with God he will not beg. He will then see prayer in action. The prayer of the farmer kneeling in his field to weed it, the prayer of the rower kneeling with the stroke of the oar, are true prayers heard throughout nature." This whole transformation which has recently come over our conception of prayer, under the influence of such considerations as I have just been discussing, is beautifully illustrated by the familiar story of the little girl and boy who were in great fear of being late to school. "Oh, let's stop," said the girl, as they ran along, "and pray God to get us to school in time."—"No," said the boy, a true son of his generation, "let's run as fast as we can, and pray while we're running."

From all this the conclusion would seem to be inevitable, would it not, that the practice of prayer is forevermore impossible for all intelligent and right-minded persons. It would seem that the change which has come over our individual and social practices in regard to prayer, during the last few years, is wholly beneficent, and that it is earnestly to be desired that we shall soon have the courage to eliminate the custom of prayer from our public services of worship as completely as we have already eliminated it from our private houses.

This is certainly the case if prayer is to be understood as meaning only what Prof. Tyndall understood it to mean when he proposed his famous "prayer-test" to the English people. But let me say right here, without any further postponement of the issue toward which I have been moving all this while, that I for one have very serious doubts if this idea of prayer as a petition to God to do something for man in the outward material world is all that is contained in this great phenomenon of religious experience—or, indeed, is properly contained therein at all! This is the idea, to be sure, which has been dominant in the minds of men ever since the first savage lifted his hands in prayer to God for vengeance upon his enemies or protection from the tempest. This is the idea which has found expression in the public and private prayers of unnumbered generations of men, as any reading of human history will clearly show. Prof. Tyndall was undoubtedly reflecting the idea of his own and every other age, when he saw in this religious practice nothing but a method for the healing of disease. But we find ourselves shaken just a bit in this connection, it seems to me, when we turn from the superstitions of the multitudes and the traditions of the church, and mount into the serene and lofty atmosphere of the great prophetic souls of the eras gone. I have been examining in my library, during the week that is past, some of "the prayers of the ages," as we might call them—the prayers which are recorded from the lips of men like Buddha and Socrates and Jesus, Augustine and St. Bernard and St.

Francis of Assisi, John Fox and John Wesley, Bishop Butler, Cardinal Newman, and Theodore Parker—men of all ages, all variations of belief, and all diversities of religious custom. Many of these prayers are expressed in the crude and superstitious language of the days in which they were spoken; and all of them fall again and again into the ignoble attitude of petition which we have been discrediting this morning. And yet the impressive fact remains that the predominating spirit of these utterances is something wholly different from anything that we have thus far considered. If we mean by prayer nothing more than a request to God for the stilling of a storm or the winning of a battle, then the utterances of these great souls are not prayers. But if, on the other hand, these utterances must be regarded as prayers in the real sense of the word, then the idea of prayer is something infinitely more sublime, more tender, and more august than anything we have yet described. And I believe that this latter is the true horn of the dilemma! I believe that we have been dealing this morning with a conception of prayer, which, however familiar or universal, is altogether inadequate. I believe that the objections which we have very properly levelled against this conception have been objections not to prayer in itself, but to a false idea of prayer which has unfortunately found lodgment within the human mind. I believe that prayer, when rightly understood and practiced, is the noblest act of which a human being is capable, and is something absolutely essential to the purity and integrity of the soul. And I believe that

it is the task of our age, not to get away from the idea and practice of prayer altogether, because a false conception of its observance has been impressed upon our attention, but to get back to that true spirit of prayer, which is reflected in the utterances of all the great souls of the centuries gone by, and then yield ourselves to this spirit "in spirit and in truth!"

And what is this true spirit of prayer, of which I am speaking? We may perhaps get at what we are after most readily by a process of analogy.

Here, we will say, is a man who has a passion for beauty, and desires to give outward expression to his passion by becoming a painter. What, now, does he do? He becomes a student of art, and, for the prosecution of his studies, betakes himself to the great galleries of the world, where are gathered those paintings which have most nearly approximated to the artistic ideal, and there he gives himself to the meditation and study of their greatness. For days and weeks together he yields himself to the creations of Raphael, Michael Angelo, Da Vinci, Titian, his mind absorbing the wonders of their beauty, his soul suffused with the marvels of their perfection. And gradually his soul begins to grow—he begins to climb up, step by step, toward the heights on which these great artists lived, until at last he begins to see the visions which they saw, to comprehend the ideals of beauty which they expressed, and finally to be able to set forth, more or less imperfectly, these visions and ideals for himself. By the constant contemplation, that is, of the great paintings of the world the student

of art finds himself gaining such insight, and consecration, that in time he is himself equipped for the creation of similar works of beauty. Witness how, as a young man, Burne-Jones worshipped at the shrine of Rossetti, studied the master's canvases by day and dreamed of them by night, until his soul had itself mounted to the heights and gained the power and the vision that it sought.

Again, here is a young man whose soul yearns to express itself in music. He also becomes a student and makes it his business to seek out the great musicians of the past and of the present, to study their symphonies and oratorios and operas, to attend concerts where his soul may be lifted up by the power of great orchestras and choruses, and thus at last, like Elijah of old, to be transported, as by a chariot of fire, into the heaven of his desires. Little by little, through such a process as this, he begins to understand and to feel, and, best of all, to find power for himself to pour forth his soul in the divine melody of song. The spirit of music, in other words, through much meditation and communion, is conjured at last to enter into his life, as the spirit of art was made to enter into the life of the painter, and there give inspiration to his labors. Witness, for example, how Richard Wagner worshipped at the shrine of Beethoven, through many a year of eager longing and patient hope, until at last the master's soul became as his own, and he himself the master of a later day.

Now here, in exactly the same way, are men and

women who are striving, some eagerly and some indifferently, to understand the secret of spiritual life, by which I mean the life of "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, meekness, faith, temperance." Students of life as the others are students of art and of music, they look abroad over the world in which they are living, and they find that every minutest particle of this world is tingling with that divine spirit of life which we call God. Here, they know, in this eternal, infinite, and loving spirit, "in which [they] live and move and have [their] being," is the ideal life of the universe, and therefore the ideal life of man; and it is the secret of this life which they are yearning to gain for the upbuilding of their souls and the perfecting of their lives. And how shall they possess themselves of this spirit of ideal life if not by following the example of the artist in his quest of beauty and the musician in his quest of song? Just as the student of art gains his power to paint his canvases by long and patient communion with the spirit of beauty, as this spirit has become incarnate and thus revealed in the supreme artistic geniuses of the world—just as the student of music finds his ability to pour forth his soul in immortal harmonies by patient meditation upon the spirit of great music, as this spirit has become incarnate and thus revealed in the great masters of the ages past, so also may we be able, to some extent, to realize and fulfill the divine life by meditating upon the deep and high things of the spirit as these are revealed first perhaps in the great and pure souls of history, but ultimately, of

course, in nothing short of the being of Almighty God. As the artist communes with perfect beauty, and so is himself able to paint—as the musician communes with perfect song, and so is himself able to sing—so also may we commune with perfect truth, perfect justice, perfect love, and so ourselves be able to live! And what is this meditation—this communion of which I speak—what is this but prayer—just such prayer as you and I offer up in our churches and sometimes in our homes—just such prayer as the great prophets of humanity have ever offered to their God? What have we been doing this morning in our prayers but sitting like the student of art, in rapt contemplation before the picture of God, as our Father who is in heaven, and having our souls, like the soul of the artist, charged with the supreme beauty and sublimity of this conception? What have we been doing in our prayers, but sitting like the student of music, listening to the divine melody of the voice of God, and having our lives transfigured by the ravishing and inspiring wonder of it all? What is any prayer but the losing of ourselves, as students of life, in the thought of God, as the student of art loses himself in the thought of beauty or the student of music in the thought of song? What is any prayer, spoken in public or in private, in the church or in the closet, "uttered or unexpressed," but our feeble, halting, human way of meditating upon God, communing with God, surrendering to God, trying as best we can to see and hear and know God, and thus transform our souls into the likeness of his spirit? Prayer is meditation,

communion, self-surrender. It is "the soul's sincere desire" to be like God. It is the meeting of spirit with spirit—the spirit of man with that spirit of God which is "nearer [to us] than breathing, closer than hands and feet." Emerson has given us the final definition and justification of prayer, in his famous saying, that "Prayer is looking at life from the highest point of view." When we pray we consciously withdraw ourselves for a moment from the world, that we may go into a high place, as Jesus went on to the Mount of Transfiguration, and look at life from this viewpoint—the viewpoint not of time but of eternity, not of earth but of heaven, not of matter but of spirit, not of man but of God. "Prayer," I repeat, "is looking at life from the highest point of view"—it is the attitude of reverence before, and surrender to, all that is better and higher than ourselves. It is thinking on "whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report." "Think on these things," says St. Paul—in other words, *pray*—and behold the God of Peace shall be with you!

Here now, as clearly as I can explain it, is what I regard as the true conception of prayer—certainly that conception which has been understood and expressed by the great prophetic souls of the past. And notice now, if you will, how directly opposed is this conception to that more familiar idea of prayer against which we found this morning so many serious objections. Prayer, as it is still understood, unfortunately,

by the overwhelming majority of men throughout the world, is nothing more nor less, as we have seen, than a petition addressed to God for some transformation of the orderly process of nature, some interruption in the unvarying sequence of cause and effect, some interference with the natural course of human events which will redound to the benefit of the person who is praying. Prayer, as commonly practiced both in the past and in the present, has concerned itself exclusively with such phenomena as rainfalls, storms, cataclysms, sickness and disease, the issues of battle, the fall of dynasties and kingdoms,—things "of the earth earthy." It has been our persistent and insistent request for changes in the physical and social world—or, as we would express it in theological terms, for a change in the mind or the will of God.

Now all this is completely reversed by this new conception of prayer, which I have just been trying to interpret. A prayer, from the new point of view, is an effort not to change God, but to change ourselves. It is an endeavor not to adapt the mind of God to our selfish ambitions and trivial desires, but to adapt our minds to the august will of the Most High. It is an attempt not to persuade God to reduce the universe to the measure of our existence, but to persuade our souls to be enlarged to the measure of the divine purpose. We pray not in order that we may "reconcile the ways of God to man," as Alexander Pope put it, but, on the contrary, that we may reconcile man to the unchanging ways of God. Prayer, when truly understood and practised, is con-

cerned not with the physical but with the spiritual world—it seeks a change not in the outer but in the inner realm—it is directed not at the mind of God but at the heart of man! When George Washington knelt in the snows of Valley Forge, and lifted up his soul to God, he prayed not in order that he might persuade God to bring victory to his arms, but in order that, by his contemplation of the divine presence and his surrender to the divine purposes, his faltering soul might be transformed from weakness to strength. When Socrates offered up his prayer to the gods of Athens, under the shadow of the famous plane-tree on the banks of the Ilissus, he prayed not because he thought he could persuade the deities to alter their will toward him, but rather because he knew that the very fact of his meditation upon the divine wisdom and his acceptance of the divine will would give him courage to meet the fate which was impending. When Benjamin Franklin, rationalist and scholar, arose at the opening session of the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia, and solemnly moved that the deliberations of each day be opened with prayer to God for his blessing and his guidance, he was not thinking that such prayer would persuade God to interfere in any personal way with the destinies of the new republic, but he was most certainly thinking that such prayers would remind the assembled statesmen that God lived, and that they must seek, in his name and for his sake, to find the true and do the right. Here do we have true prayer—the prayer that has been offered by all the great souls in all the great

moments of experience. And the prayer, let me point out, that never goes unanswered! For always "does the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him."

The whole contrast between the old and the new, the false and the true, is given to us in impressive form, in the famous scene in the Garden of Gethsemane. Here, in the moment of his awful agony, as you will remember, the Nazarene offered up two prayers to God. The first was the prayer of his weakness and fear; and the second, the prayer of his strength and faith. In the one he prayed that the cup might pass from him—that God, in other words, would interfere in some way with the dreadful doom which seemed to be awaiting him, and enable him to escape from the hands of his enemies—just the kind of prayer against which we have been objecting so strenuously this morning. This attitude, however, lasted but for a moment. Almost at once did he free himself from the terror which was threatening to overwhelm him, and rising to those sublime heights with which his soul was so familiar, he breathed forth that prayer which stands, I believe, as the noblest and truest which ever fell from human lips. "Nevertheless," he said, conquering his momentary weakness, "not as I will, but as thou wilt." The surrender of man to God—the plea not to change God's will, but to do God's will—this is prayer! as Tennyson puts it:

> "Our wills are ours, we know not how,
> Our wills are ours to make them thine."

Here, now, is the true conception of prayer—the prayer which moves in the realm of things spiritual and not physical, and works its changes in the soul of man and not in the mind of God! And here in this conception of prayer, which is so complete a reversal of the popular idea, do we find at once the solution of all the difficulties of which I spoke at the beginning of my sermon, and thus the justification of prayer as the natural, spontaneous, and indeed inevitable expression of the soul's life. So complete is this justification of prayer, that it seems to explain and to redeem even the crudest and most childish of human petitions unto God. Prayer for rain can bring no rain, but by calling to men's minds the thought of an all-wise God, it can reconcile them to enduring the drought with patience. Prayer on shipboard, as the vessel reels and shivers beneath the blast of the storm, cannot still the hurricane nor quiet the waters, but it can still the fear and quiet the anguish which are surging within the hearts of the terror-stricken passengers, by lifting their souls to the contemplation of the peace of God's over-brooding spirit. Prayer on the eve of battle can insure no victory on to-morrow's field, but it may stir the hearts of the soldiers with such devotion to the God of battles, that nothing can withstand the violence of their assault. Prayer for the loved one, who is ill, can never cure the disease, but by calling to mind "the refuge and the strength" of God, it can give comfort to the sufferer in his affliction and help the watcher to endure with patience the long ordeals of

the day and the trying vigils of the night. The one thing that men need in this world to make their lives pure and strong and true, is the consciousness within their souls of the ever-living God; and any prayer, however crude its phrase or childish its thought, which serves to create this consciousness within the soul is to that extent at least worth while. It is useless to think that God can be persuaded by our prayers to suspend one single law in our behalf, and it is criminal to wish that he could do so; but it is only truth to say that, by our prayers, we may bring ourselves into the knowledge and the love of God, and therewith gain more and better help than if suddenly every law in all the universe were altered to our benefit. The turn of one little button on the walls of my house sends the electric current coursing through every wire, and bringing light to every nook and cranny of the place. Prayer, it seems to me, is the little button by which the love of God may be diverted from the power-house of his spirit and carried into every remotest corner of the human heart. If the button remains untouched, the home remains in darkness; so, if prayer is never offered, the human heart is never united with the divine presence. But the power-house of God is always there, and it only remains for me—not God!—to say whether the eternal life, there ceaselessly being generated, shall bring its heat and light and power into my life.

Prayer, therefore, is a permanent expression of the soul's life. All the objections which can be urged against it are objections against the misconceptions

which have been placed upon it. Rightly understood, it is the attempt of man to find and to know and to love God, and to make his will to be at one with God's will. As William Watson puts it so impressively in his little book on "Prayer": "The purpose of prayer is not to change the will of God, but to make us fulfill it. The more intimate our friendship with God, the more wisely shall we pray. We shall discern something of the design God is working out in us, and we shall pray not because we want something, but because we are eager to take the full profit of our heritage and cultivate that spiritual kinship with God which the world tempts us to forget." From this point of view the practice of prayer is a spiritual necessity, and its neglect, as we witness it to-day, a spiritual calamity. For what after all, in the words of Tennyson,

> " . . . are men better than sheep or goats,
> That nourish a blind life within the brain,
> If, knowing God, they lift not hands in prayer
> Both for themselves and those who call them friend?
> For so the whole round earth is every way
> Bound by gold chains about the feet of God."

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The Ultimate Principles of a Free Christianity

BY

WILLIAM L. SULLIVAN

An Address Delivered at the Unitarian Mass Meeting in Symphony Hall, Boston, Sunday Evening, February 4, 1917

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AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION
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The American Unitarian Association was Founded in 1825 with the Following Expressed Purpose

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*The General Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, passed the following vote at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man."

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

THE ULTIMATE PRINCIPLES OF A FREE CHRISTIANITY

By William L. Sullivan

An Address Delivered at the Unitarian Mass Meeting in Symphony Hall, Boston, Sunday Evening, February 4, 1917

Mr. President:

This is not an unfit hour that assembles us here to deliberate upon the purpose that has called us, for it is an hour in which this nation is searching its soul, is looking for light, is fortifying itself for the consequence of its immense resolution. It is an hour in which a decision has been taken which a while ago we dreaded to mention and dreaded even to think, but which in the course of circumstances had to be made in order that we might declare that while we might overlook a felony that was incidental we could not possibly overlook it when it became systematic, thorough, deliberate and premeditated.

In an hour like this, when we are confronting the consequences of that resolution—and consequences not to be measured by any knowledge that we have just now—we feel that we have been flung a little closer to the ultimate realities of human life. We feel that certain conventionalities are dropping away, certain artificialities are wavering, certain surface experiences are giving way to that experience which

arises in the spirit when we look face to face upon the mightiest realities of life, of death, of duty, of eternity.

I am not in behalf of or representing such a thing as a sect that I consent to stand here or that any one on this platform should stand here. There is, I think, scarcely a word in our language that moves me to an impatient disdain quicker than the word and the thing, "a sect." If it was only to peddle the conjectures of some sect or other that was founded yesterday or the day before—if it was only to add one more to five hundred guesses after the inscrutable, I should be silent. I should refuse to serve such a thing or to open my lips to expound it or defend it.

I am interested, and so are you, in nothing but the ultimate vital reality of God's mighty life in himself and in the human spirit.

I am to explain to you if I can within the limits of that time which is set for us the nature of a religion which holds to the ultimate spiritual reality which is beneath all sects—the living power of the human spirit, the experience of God's spirit, a thing beyond all guesses, all conjectures, all the sterile theologies that ever were or that ever will be. What we are looking for is the Eternal Real so far as our soul can touch it, so far as our life can live it.

This body of free Christians that is called Unitarian aims at having no other religious principle than this essential religion which goes beneath the divisions of sects, the guesses of theology, the conjectures of creeds. The Unitarian body does not exhaust, does

not wholly take in, all the principles or all the persons attached to and embodied in this essential religion; but since its principle is to preach only the ultimate religion, the eternal as distinguished from the temporal elements of religion, we may take this Unitarian body as typical of that religion itself, as expressive of those ultimate spiritual principles, and ask what it is that it teaches.

I am going to try to answer for you three questions.

First, What is the ultimate fundamental principle of free Christianity, or, if you like, of Unitarian Christianity?

Secondly, Is this principle, once we discover it, a principle of faith or a principle of skepticism?

Thirdly, What is the spiritual vital power, energizing and beneficient influence, of the Christianity thus defined?

These are the questions which briefly—too briefly for their gravity—you will permit me to discuss.

First, what is the fundamental, last and ultimate principle of Unitarian Christianity?

There is no dogma about it, and probably certain others would in detail or incidental phrasing differ from my expression of it, but I believe I am close to the heart of the matter when I say that the fundamental spiritual principle of Unitarian Christianity is: The highest test, the ultimate standard of any religious doctrine or institution or scripture, is to be found in the moral faculties of man.

The moral faculties of man are those faculties

within us which discover right and wrong, bid us choose the right and abjure the wrong— that moral earnestness, moral passion, moral power, moral indignation, which are attached to and inhere in conscience.

Now I say the highest test, the last proof, by which we judge the truth or falsity of a religious idea, a religious doctrine, a religious book or a religious institution, is conscience— the fundamental, ultimate judgment of our sense of right and wrong.

We take this as the standard of religious ideas because the last judgments of conscience, the fundamental utterances of the moral law, are everlasting and divine; the judgments of the moral law hold for earth and hold for heaven and hold for man and hold for God. Nothing can be good on earth which is wrong to God; nothing can be good in God which would be crime to you or me. This is the standard. I wish to repeat it, as I have been repeating it in various terms, because it is of the last importance; and I declare to you that it is this principle carried to the bitter end, or if you will, to the glorious end, that enables us to judge the truth or falsity of religious claims.

Let me illustrate this in a few examples. I regret very much that I should have even to appear controversial or contentious. I am sick of the barren futilities of theological contention. I am rather well acquainted with it; there is very little but husks in it. But it is, nevertheless, a necessity for me to point out practical applications of a principle lest that principle be allowed to hang in the air. Therefore, without

any feeling of contentiousness but still with that entire candor, with that total freedom of speech which you expect of me, I beg to apply the principle just stated.

Here we have, for example, in the Old Testament, the old story of Saul's campaigns against the Amelekites. The king of Israel, Saul, was ordered by God Almighty, so runs the document, to make war upon Amelek and to kill all the people of that clan, men and women and children, down to the last one. Saul carried out his campaign; he won his victory and he killed them all except one man, King Agag. He did not kill him. Thereupon the prophet Samuel, who was the appointed oracle of God to Israel, went before Saul and said to him, "You have disobeyed your God; you have spared one man. Because you have spared one poor, shrinking wretch"—who probably was screaming for his life—"Because you have spared one man God will curse you and take the throne of Israel from you and from your family." And in order that the command of God might to the uttermost be fulfilled, Samuel took his sword and hacked the one survivor of Amelek to pieces before the altar of Jehovah.

Now we apply the principle to this and other narratives or ideas and our judgment is: we know that God is not a merciless butcher, therefore we know that that narrative is totally and scandalously false, we care not what book contains it, for our faith in God's goodness is such that no documentary or antiquarian

text can prove to us that the Eternal that we worship is bloodthirsty and delights in murder.

Another example. Again, I suppose in my ardor I may appear controversial. I do not want to be, but nevertheless, I do desire to make the application of this great principle as clear and as specific as I can. The fundamental principle which underlies the traditional theory of atonement and redemption is this: That the baby is infected with sin from his birth; that the infant inherits guilt in which he had no share; that the child upon its mother's breast is actually under the wrath of God because not yet admitted through some ceremonial or other into the opened kingdom of Paradise regained.

Here we have a perfectly plain ethical problem. The ethical problem is, the perfectly innocent person is morally—not physically, for the physical analogy does not hold in the order of morals—the perfectly guiltless human being, and that human being the most helpless of all, is infected with a sin in which it was impossible for him to have had any share whatever. We apply our principle here as everywhere; this is manifestly immoral because, ask any man who did not know of the theological doctrine whether that was right or wrong, the answer of the native and unspoiled conscience will be, "There can be no such God as that unless that God himself partakes of the nature of a monster."

One more instance which I think will complete the requisite application and expounding of the stated principle. We believe it to belong to the clearest

and to the highest ethics that the function of punishment is medicinal and not vindictive; that punishment when rational aims at the cure of the one who bears it rather than at the mere inflicting upon him of torment and anguish. The remedy for sin is not anguish but reformation. God wins his victory over sin not by tormenting the one who has sinned but by moving him with the power of his Spirit, by summoning him to shame and sorrow, to bowed head and shaken heart. There is God's victory over guilt. When, therefore, we ask whether we believe in a perfectly endless hell, our answer is not a sentimental answer just because we may have an emotional revolt from the awful picture that arises in our imagination,—our answer is rational and ethical. The answer is, In a universe of order there can be no eternal disorder. In a universe presided over by Omnipotent Goodness we hope for the last victory of Goodness for the victory over the stubborn will and over the corrupt heart. There is the victory of God; there is the victory of his grace; there is the sweep and power and creative and redemptive influence that resides in his appeal to the heart that for a while was dead. But to fancy a blind, a purposeless infliction of torment through the infinite ages, so that while God is God there will be the screams of the anguished in hell—for no end, for it never will cure but will only for eternity harden and perpetuate the guilt—that, we declare, is not moral; that, we declare, is unethical; therefore the everlasting God cannot do it, whatever the preachers behind it, whatever the churches or the

councils that proclaim it—God perceived in the flaming light of ethical passion is seen to be such a God as to be unable to give himself over to inflicting a penalty utterly useless, a torment to no possible end.

Let these instances suffice. Only if you care to take away any word that I say tonight, take this: Nothing can be good in God which would be base, revengeful or criminal in man. And carry that to the uttermost, and you have the spirit, the heart, the soul and the sanctuary of this rational and beautiful and simple Christian faith.

In answer to the question, "But is this not arbitrary? You are limiting and conditioning the ways of God by what you desire yourself. You must acknowledge that there are mysteries in religion." Yes, there are mysteries in religion, but no scandals. The eternal order is half concealed by a twilight from our mortal eye; that is true. What man of any sense, what man who has ever for five minutes given himself to reflective thought but knows it? Mystery lies on the heart of the world and on the heart of humanity. But mystery does not imply that the fundamental regulations of the order of morality are broken over and transgressed by the very Author of morality.

But the question might be pursued, "Will you not be safer, rather than trusting in your own moral judgments, to give over your allegiance to a book or a church and let the book tell you or let the church tell you what the moral law is?" The answer that Unitarian Christianity gives to that question is a

No!—uttered in tones of thunder. To deliver over the judgment of the conscience is absolutely forbidden except to God Almighty.

Perhaps in one word—it will only take a minute or two—I may illustrate to you some of the consequences of thus giving over the judgment of the moral sense to a book or an institution. Twice in the book of Exodus occurs this phrase, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live." God Almighty wrote it, it used to be held. That text, "Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live," has been responsible,—I am speaking by the book, I am not betrayed into an exaggeration of the moment — that text has been responsible literally for thousands of the ghastliest murders in human history. Men who killed witches for five hundred years of Christian history had a heart within them, and when they picked out of the community some poor old woman that hobbled on a crutch or that was bent by disease or that was shaken by palsy, they must have said, "We don't want to burn the poor thing; we shrink from seeing her shrivel in the flames." That was what the native conscience said. But the book says, "You must crush your conscience and not suffer a witch to live."

You see how the Unitarian principle is exemplified here in an instance of awful magnitude and importance. Whatever the unspoiled consciences of good men agree upon as fundamentally, ultimately good, is God Almighty's will. Whatever this same conspiration of good consciences declares to be evil is

evil, and to saddle it upon God is immoral and blasphemous.

One other instance, and I will pass to something else. Men have given over the judgment of their moral sense not only to books but to institutions, to churches. Let me give you one result of that. We are naturally disinclined to murder. We do not wish to see anyone rotting in a dungeon or dying at a stake. That is the native conscience. But when churches have said to this native conscience of men, "You must burn the heretic and we will give you an indulgence for bringing the fagots to his fire," don't you see the disaster of giving over conscience to any but the God who made it and inspires it? To surrender conscience to anybody — a book, a pontiff, a church—to forego the imperative utterance of our moral sense, is in my judgment — and you may take it for what it is worth or what you think it is worth —altogether a blasphemy.

But if, then, these Unitarians thus limit their adhesion to any doctrine by what the moral sense and conscience dictates. Are they not in danger of rejecting much in the Bible that is good, much in historic Christianity that is good? No danger whatsoever. Wherever the spiritual nature discovers good, righteousness, inspiration, elevation, devotion, it seizes upon it as its native food. Nothing is lost in any Bible or in any church because we reject with emphasis everything that offends against the moral law. Rather is there a purer residue, a clearer perception of the divineness of Bibles or of churches,

because we attribute that quality of divineness only to what can legitimately endure it.

The second question—to be answered much more briefly is: Is this Unitarian principle the product and the parent of faith or skepticism—which? My dear friends, this principle just now stated is productive of the highest, most invincible and most victorious faith. Orthodoxy has skepticism seated at the heart of it, inseparable and incurable. For example, are we not told this: Don't question this text of the Bible; if you do, the whole structure of religion is gone. Do not dare to have a doubt; if you do, God is gone. Do not read certain books; if you do, you will become an atheist. Keep the students in our theological seminaries as much blinded as we can. Have a list of forbidden books, lest they should know too much about the scientific movement and aspiration of the modern age. If you distrust the Book, if you question one statement of the creed, the whole structure of your faith collapses and you are Godless in an atheistic world.

Do you not see that this is the very essence of skepticism? Is belief in God then so precarious that if in the course of my studies I deny one text God the Eternal is therefore gone? How narrow, how meagre, how poor and how feeble is, therefore, the foundation of our faith! And I must not read certain books, because I shall lose God in my soul. Has God then so delicate a hold upon us that if I think too much I will lose him? My dear friends,

it seems to me plain that there we have skepticism consecrated, skepticism incurable. But if a man is able to say, "If my reason leads me to it I will doubt not one text but fifty, and still the everlasting God floods the universe with his holy light, still the assurances of his divinity speaks within my conscience and utter their august admonitions to the heart," there is a faith that can dare to say, "The Eternal God is within you." Study everything, read everything, only with a reverent heart. Deny what your reason leads you to deny; it is your duty. To run away from doubt is not moral, but the contrary. And still, though you doubted fifty Bibles, though you transformed or abandoned a score of creeds, God the Everlasting lives here, beyond all doubt. To him our heart aspires; to him our conscience utters the vow of obedience; to him our reason sends its aspiration after truth. This strikes me as faith indeed, faith unshakable, faith invincible.

There is one serious side to this matter that has just been mentioned, and that serious side is this: When men take as their final standard a book or an institution, the danger is that they will begin to trifle with their intelligence and their conscience. The danger is that a man in the pulpit will have a secret doubt which the canons of his church forbid him to utter nobly and in a spirit of frankness. The danger is that there will be secret misgivings, secret doubts, secret despair, and that a man will be tempted to trifle with—to make an unworthy treaty with—honor, honesty, sincerity. That is the danger of a

system which binds a man not to follow God's light of conscience, whatever he may deny, but binds him to the statements of a book, to the syllables of a creed, to the dogmatic utterances of a church.

I am not here even to imply a judgment upon any man or class. I only state to you this fact which is patent to all the world — that there is now coming forth from churches of Christendom, not one but many—and those the oldest and the largest— a literature of protest: Give us permission to study and to give to the world in free speech the result of our study. Modernism, the excommunication of the suspected, the summoning of the clergy to take a solemn oath that they do not hold the results of modern scholarship; watching upon young clergymen and having actually systems of spying that their reading may be reported to some bishop or other—this is the disastrous conflict of sincerity whenever we substitute for the light of reason an external, a mechanical and an artificial standard of our speech or our thought.

Against all that the Unitarian principle is, Deny what your deliberate reason causes you to deny; question whatever an honorable doubt disposes you to question, but live for the highest with a pure passion; give yourself to the best; seek God. Having that, you have all. Question what may be; let the progress of science that is causing the foundation of orthodoxies to sway as with premonitions of an earthquake—let that progress go on; you are dedicated to the Supreme. The pillars of the earth may fall

and the vault of heaven may crash down, but you, holding to the Eternal, must be safe.

Lastly, what is the spiritual power of a Unitarian Christianity? The report is that Unitarians are not very pious, that they do not pray much, that it is really only a sort of club of rather cultivated persons who are more or less pagan at the heart of them. Is there any spiritual power, is there any vigorous life of the spirit? That is our question. It is difficult to answer it because it involves the uncovering of the secrecies of souls. Let me, however, in these few words answer it by saying, if Unitarians know what they have, if they realize the eternal value of that which they profess, they must be given over, dedicated, devoted to the Supreme, to the Infinite, to God. They have gladly turned away from much that has been inherited in Orthodoxy, because neither their rational light could prove it nor their moral sense establish it; but they have kept the divineness of the soul and the divinity of the Soul of Souls that holds us all.

I think I may say that these people look upon life and sorrow and death and judgment and God with as serene a spirit as you can find in Christendom, because their trust is indestructible that the encompassing Life is a Father's life and that in eternity it will be a consummation guided by God's love that they are to reach.

I think that may be said. Get into your minds the invincible persuasion that this human spirit is led by

Love unfailing, Love victorious. The mist of death may fall upon your eyes or mine tonight, now. What matter? We face death, eternity, anything held reserved in the unexplored mysteries of God, not trembling, knowing this—that over all is wisdom and holding all is Love. If that is understood there will be no failure of the spiritual life; there will rather be a perfect passion for the holy will. There will rather be a joyous service of our struggling brothers; there will be a welcome to the mysteries not given to our present gaze to see.

I conclude, dear friends, with thoughts kindred to those with which I began. The particular dispositions of the hour that we are living in have flung us, I say, close to the great realities. What avails it to you or to me to prove our sects if we have sects? Nothing. What avails it, for instance, to me, as the old phrase was, to "convert" anybody? Absolutely nothing. We stand on the margin of eternity. Our little passions are not worth much unless they are moral passions. Our little ambitions—let us not speak of them, they are too little. Oh, but one thing does matter—one thing lives: It is the gracious spirit of the All Holy God, living in the rational and moral and affective powers of men, that lifts life to the heights, that glorifies suffering, that exalts death. On the face of that Father is no shadow of implacable hate. No vengeance is in him, no lash is swung in a merciless hand. In life or death we look to thee, unafraid and unconfounded. This is the beginning and the end of our faith. It was the faith of Jesus.

THE American Unitarian Association is the working missionary organization of the Unitarian churches of America. It seeks to promote sympathy and united action among Liberal Christians, and to spread the principles which are believed by Unitarians to be essential to civil and religious liberty and progress and to the attainments of the spiritual life. To this end it supports missionaries, establishes and maintains churches, holds conventions, aids in building meeting-houses, publishes, sells and gives away books, sermons, tracts, hymn-books, and devotional works.

A list of free tracts will be sent on application. A full descriptive catalogue of the publications of the Association, including doctrinal, devotional and practical works, will be sent to all who apply.

The Association is supported by the voluntary contributions of churches and individuals.

There are two forms of membership in this Association provided for those who desire to cooperate in the spread of liberal religious thought and influence:

I. *Life Membership.* Any individual may, by the payment of $50, become a *Life Member* of the American Unitarian Association. Such a person is entitled to vote at all business meetings, to receive the Year Book and Annual Report, and, by means of frequent communications, is kept in touch with the various enterprises promoted by the Association.

II. *Associate Membership.* Other individuals desiring to affiliate with the Association may become *Associate Members* by signing an application card (sent upon request) and the payment of $1.00. As such they will receive a certificate of *Associate Membership*, also *Unitarian Word and Work* (the monthly magazine reporting denominational news), each new pamphlet as it is issued, and occasional other communications from Headquarters.

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[No. 288]

"WHO ARE THESE UNITARIANS?"

BY

REV. GEORGE H. BADGER

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AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION
25 BEACON STREET, BOSTON

"WHO ARE THESE UNITARIANS?"

Away down near the bottom of every official list of the "religious forces" of the country comes always this name of "Unitarians." Of course it is the alphabet partly, and partly the gross materialism of census-statistics, that makes the place in the list so lowly; and yet, somehow, because in the annals of the nation's literature and philanthropies, its statesmanship and education, this name recurs so frequently as a biographical incident, and because in all dramatic onslaughts of the vehemently orthodox against the ranks of heresy, so popular nowadays, this name receives distinguishing attention above all other names,—everybody is familiar with its sound, if only vaguely understanding its specific import; that now and then a languid truth-seeker asks curiously the question,—lightly: "*Who are these Unitarians?*"

I attempt to answer the question briefly. And let me say at the outset that this is to be not so much a discussion of theologies as a discussion of personal equation. I am to tell not so much what these people who belong to Unitarian churches believe, as what sort of people these are who believe the things the Unitarian churches stand for.

Of course everybody agrees that personally these people are worthy, honorable, and decently agreeable people, as a rule, to have in a neighborhood. Perhaps they put a little too much stress indeed on the

"religion of personal righteousness," — "good-neighborliness," "salvation by character," and this world's immediate responsibilities. That is a frequent criticism brought against them. They seem more concerned that men should understand what this world means in terms of duty, divinity and eternal destiny, than that their dream of "other-worldliness" crowd the soul with splendid vision. They talk more specifically about civic righteousness, social progress, the "Christliness" of the day-to-day deeds of simple service, than of the eternal welfare of immortal souls.

Then "these Unitarians" often have the reputation, —a bad reputation, I think it is,—for "over-intellectuality." Most of them don't deserve it in the least, let me hasten to say; and yet there is a tendency undoubtedly amongst Unitarian people to emphasize the intellectual and cultural side of things. "These people give more attention to Emerson and Browning than they do to the Bible," I heard someone say once. "They seem to count more on Herbert Spencer than on Saint Paul as an apostle of truth." I will not argue about the matter; but undoubtedly the people who come to our churches do put more stress on "thoughtfulness" than they do on "piety" or "sentiment" in religion; and this certainly has its perils, if also its wholesome advantages.

One serious trouble about "these Unitarians," let us candidly confess it, is their tendency to stay "few." We are a very small body, the country over, as compared with other denominations. Some of the reasons are to our credit, and some of them to our shame.

We will not discuss that now. Yet there is no harm remembering that there are fewer high schools than grade schools in any average community,—and fewer universities than high schools.

And somehow, in proportion to their numbers these Unitarians do make some stir and do some work in the world, after all. Let me illustrate by two instances. In a certain Western city far and far away from the "peculiar" influences of New England, a little Unitarian society, not yet strong enough to have its own church home, obtained the temporary privilege of using the reading room of the local Public Library for services. And there upon its walls they found hanging the portraits of nine "eminent masters of the world's thought,"—as befitted the decoration of a Public Library. And in their midst these Unitarian people felt very much at home; for seven of the nine were of their fellowship of faith,—and the other two not alien to their spirit. Was it just an accident?

Again: in a certain state of our Union,—(of course Massachusetts, where we are stronger numerically than elsewhere, though even there near the bottom of the list in popular statistics),—an enthusiastic layman came into our denominational Headquarters one morning just after an election, exultant over the fact that the President of his nation, the Governor of his state, the Mayor of Boston where he did his business, and the Mayor of the suburban city where he lived, the speaker of his state's legislature and the representative of his district in the national Congress, all belonged to the Unitarian fellowship;—"and not one

of them"—he added "—a machine politician, either, but all allied to progressive, clean, upright ideals of public service." That was something to brag of,—and we all like to brag.

How does this sort of thing happen? How in a company of religious believers so small, do so many seem to "shake to the top" in so many different fields of activity?

It's a matter of personal equation, I insist. We are dealing not so much with a quality of theology as with a quality of mind and character. For let it never be forgotten that the Unitarian faith is not so much a body of doctrine as an attitude of soul, a temper of mind, a spirit of life. In the first place "these Unitarians" are people who temperamentally have the habit of facing the universe squarely and asking straight questions. Because the fathers have always believed a thing to be so,—because all one's neighbors are in the habit of saying that a thing is so,—is no final reason for being sure that a thing is so. Let's look into the matter, and find valid reasons for our beliefs and opinions; especially if there is anything about them that seems unreasonable or unfair in the light of modern knowledge. Here is the beginning of the liberal's frame of mind. He dares to bring to the issues of religion the same courage of scrutiny, the same insistance on reasonable evidence, that he brings to issues of science, of history, of economics. He takes it for granted that the universe he lives in is a reasonable universe,—*all the way through!*—and that therefore Reason's way of meeting the

great problems of the meaning of the universe is the safe and honest way.

The result of this attitude of mind in religion brings the Unitarian people to a substantial agreement as to certain definite theological faiths. They have indeed no *creeds*,—believing that a man's truth-loyalty should be to his own conscience, and not to some outside authority,—and the things they agree upon are simply the common product of a method of free inquiry.

All Unitarians, for instance, are evolutionists:—believe in the principle of development and growth as the fundamental and scapeless law of universal being;

Unitarians all accept the principles of the "Higher Criticism of Scripture"; holding all reverence and love for the splendid literature of the Bible, but insisting that this literature must meet the same challenges of historical and literary criticism that all other literatures must meet,—and prove itself "Word of God" only to the degree to which it can meet the tests of truth's own courage of truth-inquiry;

Unitarians all seek to find a conception of God that fits in with the modern range of modern scholarship,—unembarrassed by the limitations of faulty mathematics or questionable ethics with which the past tradition has fettered the world;

Unitarians all cry out for a conception of Immortality that shall be purged of barbarous methods of cruel vindictiveness and deformed justice;

Unitarians are not pessimistic about the natural estate of human nature,—believing that "original

divinity" is a more potent factor of life for the average human soul than "original sin."

Reasonableness, progressiveness, and the eternal method of good-will they believe to be the keynotes of any adequate theology for our times; and they try to realize these ideals in their own accumulating faith.

"But,"—someone insists immediately,—"you are describing a host of people of our acquaintance who never are called Unitarians at all."

Very true. I frankly say that all the people that have this viewpoint I have just been defining, and share with us the essential substance of our theology, are not Unitarians. God knows if they were, our denomination would climb to much nearer the top of the statistical ladder very quickly. A great many people believe practically what we believe, — but don't come to our church, don't call themselves by our name,— and can we honestly concede to them the right to our name, if ever they should want it? Can they justly be counted in with "these Unitarians"?

No; because in my description so far given I have left out two vitally determinant factors that must properly be included in a valid definition of Unitarians. And I can best demonstrate these two factors by differentiating two classes of people who though "liberal" do not belong to our order.

First, there are the people who believe "practically as we do,"—but remain in the fellowship of other denominations. Many of them have most worthy reasons, as they think, for doing so. I bring them no reproach. Others have reasons not so worthy. I need

not list them. My point is that they are not "of our sort," because a fundamental quality in the personal equation of our sort is not simply open-mindedness and progressive manner of thought,—but a certain robust insistence on the courage of sincerity and genuineness in religion, which makes it impossible for the soul to trifle or default with fundamental convictions.

It is not enough to believe that the liberal faith is true; one must believe that it is *tremendously important because true*,—to make the real liberal in religion. A sense that the world needs truth more than it needs anything else,—that to hinder the coming of the largest measure of truth possible, or to contribute to the continuance of error and superstition in the great issues of religion is to do the world a wrong, and conspire for the hurt of one's fellow men,—this sense of robust sincerity in religion, I say, is also involved in the personal equation of our sort and never left to be out of the reckoning.

The other class is made up of people, who, "believing substantially as we," have broken away from all church allegiance, and "do not want any more church at all." They are out of all "religion's business." Many of these people have staunch and definite conviction for the basis of their position. I bring them no reproach. But they are right in saying that though they share our convictions to a large degree, they do not belong to our company. A vital distinction of a good many of these people is that they are enormously more interested in the negative side of "liberalism" than in its positive aspects. They are enthusiastically

eager about the things *they don't believe*; they have a very languid consciousness of the things they really do believe, so far as religion is concerned. This marks them off from us immediately.

For more and more there grows upon "our sort" of liberals the sense of the wonderful worth of the *positive side* of faith's rational achievement. Are some things that men used to believe swept away? But the new visions, the new demands, the new revelations of the large, supreme reality of the Divine, —what age has ever had so much as ours? When could a human soul so stalwartly rejoice in the bigness of the thing that religion really means, as in this day of spiritual emancipation? "These Unitarians" are the liberals who have resolute sense of *responsibility* to the truth. They believe in religion *all the more* because it is rational; feel the tingling challenge of the world's need for more effectual service in the fight for righteousness and the supremacy of the ideal over the dominance of selfishness, greed, ignorance, and craven sloth in the business of the world's progress.

And they believe in the *organized way* of doing good and helping the truth to triumph. They believe that Right is a matter worth taking pains about,—worth-paying money to advance,—worth making sacrifices for,—worth being brave and insistent about. And so they are not skulking along the out-skirts looking on, but enlisted in the ranks of definite commital. They honor truth's flag by rallying about it.

For in our day the world needs in every issue of life, *first of all*, more thoughtfulness and open-mind-

edness,—more progressive asking of questions and demanding straight answers: that every institution in a community helping to stimulate this attitude of mind is a factor of high value. *But that isn't all.* Men may be very thoughtful and progressive in their thinking, but that does not go very far. They must have the *courage* of their convictions, and *genuineness* in their progressive thinking. And even that is not enough. They must have not only thoughtfulness and the courage of their thoughtfulness,—they must have the sense of *moral responsibility* for the things they think. They must make thoughtfulness focus through courage to the zest and passion of some sturdy *urge* of conscience, some dynamic of character-consecration. Then they achieve the essential values of religion,—*the honor of faith.*

"These Unitarians" are not concerned most of all in the business of multiplying the number of people "who think their way" in religion. That is a small part of it. They are mightily concerned with the very *triumph of religion itself.* They are concerned about the multiplying of the number of people who will not only think clearly and largely and genuinely in religious matters, but have straight-dealing courage with their convictions, and most of all that sense of enlistment in the responsibility of loyal service that makes the "get-together" zest of practical efficiency the final logic of their faith. To those who have attained the full measure of the process the name of Unitarian may properly belong. God make us who have assumed the title, worthy of the name ourselves!

[No. 289]

The First Century of the Liberal Movement in American Religion.

BY

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President of the Pacific Unitarian School for the Ministry, Berkeley, California.

PUBLISHED FOR FREE DISTRIBUTION

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION

25 BEACON STREET, BOSTON

The American Unitarian Association was Founded in 1825 with the Following Expressed Purpose

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*The General Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, passed the following vote at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man."

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

THE FIRST CENTURY OF THE LIBERAL MOVEMENT IN AMERICAN RELIGION.[1]

by Earl Morse Wilbur, D.D.

President of the Pacific Unitarian School for the Ministry, Berkeley, California

In the *Panoplist* for June, 1815, there was published an article on "American Unitarianism," which was destined, and I suppose also designed, to split to the bottom that rift between the liberal and the conservative wings of Massachusetts Congregationalism, which had indeed long been growing slowly wider, but which many in both parties had up to that time fondly hoped might not prove permanent or serious. The year 1915 therefore marks the end of the first century of the separate and distinct existence of that stream of religious tendency in American Christianity which I think is best designated as the Liberal Movement, though it has come commonly to bear the less adequate name of Unitarianism; and it is of its development during this first century that I wish to speak. This Liberal Movement had been long in preparing, but it was, to all practical intents and purposes, indigenous to Massachusetts Congregationalism. For although Socinianism had become a well developed

[1] Being the substance of an address at the anniversary of the Alumni Association of the Harvard Divinity School, June 21, 1916.

system of doctrine on the Continent of Europe before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth, and had already begun to infect Holland when they settled at Leyden, and although it profoundly influenced the development toward Unitarianism in England, yet I have sought in vain for any evidence of its having had any clear or direct influence upon the religious thought of New England. Nor was our movement a direct importation overseas of that English Unitarianism which may be said to have begun its separate denominational existence with the opening of Lindsey's Chapel in London in 1774, more than forty years before the date which I have taken as the starting point of the movement in America. On the contrary, the English movement, to which the writings of Priestley served as a sort of body of divinity, was pretty well identified with doctrinal and philosophical views which most of the New England liberals regarded with considerable repugnance. Priestley and Lindsey, it is true, were more or less read here by the beginning of the nineteenth century; but of the New England clergy only Dr. Freeman of King's Chapel and Dr. Bentley of Salem are known to have had sympathy with their general views—unless we go outside of Massachusetts and mention John Sherman of Connecticut. The noteworthy English Unitarian Tracts of 1690 and after have left no trace of influence on New England thought, still less have the writings of John Biddle; and the only English anti-trinitarian work reprinted in New England in the eighteenth century was the Arian Thomas Emlyn's "Humble

Inquiry into the Scripture Account of Jesus Christ," published in Boston in 1756.[1] In fact, down to this very day, although the liberal movements in England and in America have long been in hearty sympathy with each other, yet in the development of their thought there has been comparatively little mutual dependence between them. Only Martineau on the one hand, and Channing and Parker on the other, have had any marked influence across the intervening sea.

The Liberal Movement, then, grew up out of the bosom of Massachusetts Congregationalism, whose theology (as need hardly be said, save to set up a point of departure) was for long after the coming of the Pilgrims the strict Calvinism defined in the Westminster standards and the Savoy Confession. This was taken for granted with so little question that assent to creeds was not even asked, and members joined churches upon assenting to simple, undogmatic covenants. Thus all unwittingly the door was left open through which later on liberal thought began to float in like an invisible atmosphere until in many a congregation all that most distinguished the system of Calvin had disappeared, though no one could have said just when or how. This gradual mellowing of thought was the counterpart of a similar process going on at the same time in England; and it was stimulated and hastened, here as there, by the writings of such Anglican liberals as John Locke, Samuel Clarke,

[1] Extracts from this were later published at Boston, 1790. Various devotional works by English Arians or Unitarians were also published in New England.

Chillingworth, John Taylor and Archbishop Tillotson; and of such liberal Dissenters as Baxter, Doddridge, Lardner and Watts, all of them widely read in the Colonies in the eighteenth century. The net result of these and other co-operating influences was a growing and deepening sentiment in many minds, in favor of greater simplicity, reasonableness, and mutual tolerance in religion; an increasing disposition to emphasize only the essentials in Christianity, and those few in number; and to let the rest pass, if possible, into oblivion. The Liberal Movement, thus rooted far back in the eighteenth century, was for a long time not especially concerned with the doctrine of the Trinity, but simply with making Christianity in general, if I may use the figure, more easily digestible. It was not organized, it had no leaders, it carried on no propaganda. It was simply a silent drift of many individuals, in one general direction, yet toward no chosen port. And while warning voices had been more and more frequently raised by the conservatives for more than ninety years, yet so guarded had the liberals been in their public utterances and writings, that although even before the end of the century there were a full fifty Congregational ministers no longer holding the doctrine of the Trinity, still as late as 1815 no sermon had been preached against it save at King's Chapel, and no book save Worcester's "Bible News" had been published against it by a Massachusetts Congregationalist.

But in 1815 the conservatives haply discovered,

and reprinted, a chapter in a book[1] published in London three years before, containing evidence that could not well be called in question, that the New England liberals were unconfessed Unitarians. This charge had for some time been made by the conservatives, but had been repudiated as a calumny or a slander by the liberals, who preferred to be called simply Liberal, or Rational, or Catholic Christians. They were with few exceptions Arians in belief, holding exalted views of the person and office of Christ, and most unwilling to be confounded with the English Unitarians who, as followers of Priestley, held Jesus to have been a man of physical, mental and moral frailties, and in general adopted many sentiments to which the American liberals were utterly opposed. They did not deny, however, that in the narrower sense of belief in the simple Unity of God they held Unitarian views, and so far the charge and the name were admitted. It was thus that the Liberal Movement had fastened upon it the inadequate name which it has ever since borne; inadequate, because save for limited periods or in restricted areas the controversy as to Unity or Trinity has not been the chief distinguishing mark of the movement in America, and moreover has now long since ceased to be to most liberals of any interest whatsoever. The subsequent history of the movement derives its most vital significance from the process by which quite other connotations and denotations have gradually gathered about the denominational name Unitarian,

[1] Belsham's Memoirs of Theophilus Lindsey.

quite overshadowing the single restricted one which furnished almost the sole doctrinal agreement among the New England Liberal Christians of a century ago. It is this process that I shall now attempt to describe.

From 1815, then, the Liberal Movement, now plainly labelled, and with its adherents more or less clearly identified, begins to date its distinct and separate existence, although the separation may not be said to have been quite completed until 1833. Meanwhile the liberals and the conservatives, or as they had now come to be commonly called, the Unitarians and the Orthodox, with mutual bitterness of spirit, and amid controversies that rent the peace of the Church with little cessation for well nigh twenty years, drew steadily further apart upon their divided ways. Into the matter or the merits of the questions at issue between them I do not mean here to go, but shall deal only with the development that took place henceforth among the Unitarians.

The development of the Liberal Movement as to its spirit and thought (which are all that I concern myself with here) may be traced through five tolerably distinct stages, and these seem to me to be admirably represented by five epoch-marking sermons[1] of which I am about to speak. The first of these is Channing's Baltimore sermon of 1819. The influence of this sermon was largely due to the fact that it

[1] I say epoch-*marking* rather than epoch-*making* because (though some of them at least were also the latter) the five sermons selected seemed to me so well to epitomize the respective stages of progress. Gannett's sermon is published as a tract by the Western Unitarian Headquarters; the other four as tracts by the American Unitarian Association.

furnished the Unitarians for the first time with something which they could regard as a platform, a deliberate statement by one generally acknowledged as their leader, of the faith they had to defend and were soon to promote; for hitherto they had disagreed among themselves as to every doctrine save the Trinity, and had been united on no principle save abhorrence of authoritative creeds. This sermon, perhaps the widest, deepest, and most long-continued in its influence of any sermon ever preached in America, took for its thesis that the Scriptures, when interpreted by the principles of reason, teach the doctrines which are held by Unitarians. Such a thesis offered what was at the time the inevitable ground for either defense or attack; for the liberal party, having now totally repudiated the authority of creeds, seemed disposed to appeal if anything more strictly than even the orthodox, to the authority of Scripture. This is apparently what Channing set out to do in the argument of his Baltimore sermon, and it is what he promises in his introduction. And yet the singular and significant fact is that when he proceeds to discuss the several doctrines with which he deals, he very largely ignores the appeal to Scripture, and instead bases his argument almost wholly upon reason; and in doing this he pre-figures and as it were epitomizes the clear tendency of the Liberal Movement during its first period. He does not, it is true, betray any consciousness that he is adopting a radical change of base; no more did the Unitarians of this period. But Professor Stuart was quick to

realize what lay beneath, and declared that the simple question between the parties must soon be "whether natural or revealed religion is our guide and hope"; and added, "Unitarianism will come to pure rationalism—the sooner the better. Then the parties will understand each other." Later on, indeed, Channing himself spoke out more unmistakably, saying, "I am surer that my rational nature is from God than that any book is an expression of his will." To be sure, appeals to Scripture were still made, and proof-texts still quoted, where they would serve a purpose, throughout the whole controversy. But more and more the issue raised was whether the controverted doctrines were reasonable or unreasonable, whether their implications or tendencies were moral or immoral, whether they promoted practical piety or hindered it. Thus by the end of the period of controversy with Orthodoxy in 1833, the Liberal Movement had all but unconsciously passed through its first radical transformation. It had transferred its seat of authority (at least so far as particular doctrines were concerned) from the Scripture without to the reason within.

Unitarianism was now finally and fully separated from Orthodoxy, and henceforth there was to be no general controversy between them. The long and bitter war was over, the frontier boundaries had been fixed and apparently fortified against successful encroachments from either side; the Unitarians, who had entered the strife against their will, drew a sigh of relief that it was now at an end, counted up their

gains, and settled down for a long period of peace, as they hoped, in the enjoyment, and the quiet diffusion, of "pure Christianity." Most of them would have been more than content to have the reform stop here; but it was not so to be. The peace lasted barely five years, when a longer and scarcely less bitter war broke out in their own camp. It was regrettable, but it was inevitable unless the Liberal Movement were now to stagnate; for the liberty of thought and of belief that they had achieved was still far from complete. They had indeed exchanged one set of doctrines for another; but these were mere differences of detail, and of indifferent importance, as they themselves had for long maintained. For in fundamental principle they held no radical difference from the Orthodox. They still grounded their Christian faith in general, if not their doctrines in particular, on the Scriptures as before; and it was likely enough that a Unitarian canon of Scripture doctrine might ere long be set up which should at length prove little less hampering to the freedom of the soul than the creeds had been which they had thrown off. Channing himself realized this full well when, writing to Martineau in the year before his death, he said, "Old Unitarianism must undergo important modification or developments . . . . It does not strike living springs in the soul . . . . It pledged itself to progress . . . . but it has gradually grown stationary, and now we have a *Unitarian* Orthodoxy."

The second stage of development in the Liberal Movement, which was now to interfere with this all

too willing stagnation, is represented in Emerson's Divinity School Address. That address must ever be admired for the loftiness of its thought, and the limpid beauty of its expression. But who, reading it for the first time to-day, could easily understand what a revolutionary message it embodied? Does it not seem almost common-place to us, as though it simply said for us what we have always thought for ourselves? So much the greater, then, the testimony to the revolution in religion which it heralded. I shall not attempt here to give any account of that address. It is enough for the purpose for me merely in fewest words to state its essential message, which is this: that whereas religious truth is properly intuitive in man, current religious thought regards it as external to him, founded on persons and events in historical Christianity, and in so doing ignores the springs of religion in the soul; and that the religion of the day can be revitalized only as men come to look within, rather than without, for the revelation of God.

The views expressed in this message were not wholly new. George Ripley, writing two years later in reply to Professor Andrews Norton, bore witness that already many of the liberal ministers "had been led to feel the necessity of a more thorough reform in theology; they were not satisfied that the denial of the Trinity and its kindred doctrines gave them possession of all spiritual truth; they wished to press forward in the course which they had begun, to ascend to higher views . . . they had become convinced of

the superiority of the testimony of the soul to the evidence of the external senses; the essential character of Christianity, as a principle of spiritual faith, of reliance on the Universal Father, and of the intrinsic equality and brotherhood of man, was made more important than the historical circumstances with which it was surrounded, at its introduction into the world." This was still, to be sure, but the view of a minority, probably a small minority; but now that it had been given conspicuous public utterance by one bearing the reputation which Emerson had already won, it was felt that the strongest efforts must be made lest the foundations of Christianity be subtly undermined, and all the hard-won gains of the Liberal Movement be worse than lost.

For two elements in the address were felt to be fatal to any true conception of Christianity; its apparent pantheism, suggested as much by what it omitted as by what it said; and the infidelity which was felt to be involved in its ignoring of the importance of the historical element in the Christian religion, that is, specifically, the miracles. Just ten weeks later, in the College chapel, Professor Henry Ware sought to give an antidote to the former poison in a sermon on The Personality of the Deity, which, though it made no reference to Emerson's address, evidently enough had him in mind, and implied in plain terms that the views it opposed were in effect atheistic, and subversive of worship, virtue, and revelation. And the following summer Professor Norton offered his memorable defense of miracles as the indispensable

foundation of Christian faith, and opposed the treacherous influence of those who, following the delusive teachings of Spinoza, Schleiermacher, and De Wette, but still pretending to be Christians, sought to undermine the belief of others by advocating "the latest form of infidelity," as the title of his address styled the views which he criticised.

It requires a considerable exercise of the historical imagination for us of to-day to comprehend how the crisis precipitated by the Divinity School Address could by any possibility have been regarded as so serious. It is necessary to remind ourselves, therefore, that the philosophy underlying the Christian theology of 1838 was still predominantly that of John Locke, who held that all our knowledge comes to us through the senses; and that this presupposition was extended no less to religious truth than to secular. Even the central truths of Christianity, the relations of man to God and eternity, so Professor Norton declared, rested upon the authenticating foundation of external, historical facts, that is, the miracles attesting the divine mission of Christ, and upon these alone; and he who denied them struck directly, therefore, at the very root of faith in Christianity, and indirectly of all religion; he denied, in effect, the very existence of God.

One other foundation of Christianity, of great prominence in the history of Christian Apologetics, though it entered little into the present controversy, had also recently been threatened. In 1834 Rev. George Rapall Noyes, later Professor Noyes, published

in the *Christian Examiner* a review of Hengstenberg's *Christologie des Alten Testaments*, in which he maintained that the so-called messianic prophecies did not properly apply to Jesus, and that the New Testament writers had been mistaken in so applying them; and for this he is said to have narrowly escaped prosecution for the crime of blasphemy. Heresy, of a sort, this might easily have seemed, but why should that have been deemed blasphemy which enlightened scholars of all schools of thought now accept without a tremor? Because ever since English Christianity's great struggle with Deism in the eighteenth century, reliance had been placed upon the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy, along with the New Testament miracles, as one of the two main proofs of the truth of the Christian religion. Whosoever denied it was thus a fatal foe to Christianity. And now between Emerson and Noyes, both the piers supporting the bridge by which Christians hoped to pass to immortal life were being undermined.

Emerson's relation to this movement was simply that of a seer. He saw his vision, related what he had seen, and went his way, apparently unconcerned. When the attempt was made to call him back to argue as to the correctness of his vision, he professed himself unable to argue the question at all. George Ripley, indeed, did argue it ably and extensively with Professor Norton; and Theodore Parker, disguised as "Levi Blodgett," made an argument of "the previous question," in which we may now read a prophecy of the important part he was soon to bear.

But taken all in all, the discussion had been over an academic question, which chiefly concerned scholars, and had not to any great extent reached the popular ear. In two years' time it was virtually at an end; though the issue of it, for those that assimilated the new tendencies it exhibited, was to change the foundation of Christianity, and for that matter of all religion, from the testimony of events and persons in the past to the witness of the soul in the present. It was a longer step than that marked twenty years before; and it was also the earliest dawn of mysticism among American Unitarians.

But before this transforming teaching could become very widely diffused, the vision of the seer must be winged with the words of a prophet; and the prophet soon arose in the person of Theodore Parker. The third stage of development in the Liberal Movement, therefore, continuing and supplementing the second, is represented in the third of the epoch-marking sermons, Parker's sermon on "The Transient and the Permanent in Christianity," preached at South Boston in 1841. I have lately heard it wittily and wisely said that when the Pilgrim Fathers landed at Plymouth they did not realize that they were Pilgrim Fathers. No more did Parker, when he preached at South Boston, realize that he was stepping forth as the prophet of a new dispensation. Nor was his sermon at once recognized as gravid with theological revolution. He was still but a humble country minister, and he thought but poorly of his sermon. It aroused a certain measure of dissent, as might be

expected among Unitarians, but not at once any sharp comment; and it might soon have been forgotten had it not been heard by three local ministers of other denominations who made notes of it, and sought from certain of Parker's utterances to take a tactical advantage over the Unitarians in general. Selecting a page of the most offensive passages in the sermon (and there was unhappily an abundance of them to choose from), they rushed into print with them, and, as though it had legitimately been any of their own affair, asked whether the Unitarian ministers participating meant to acknowledge the man who had said these things, as a Christian minister. To tell the truth, using a homely phrase found in the dictionary, they seem to have intended to put these ministers "in a hole." The latter promptly declined to be so put. With pathetic eagerness to escape yet worse theological odium than they already had to bear, they made haste to disavow all sympathy with the opinions under criticism, and with the man who had uttered them. The Boston Association of Congregational Ministers, and soon after that a much larger circle of the Unitarian clergy, took up the hue and cry; and thus was fairly launched that controversy over Radicalism which even in its narrower phases lasted till the Civil War, and which in its wider bearings occupied the attention of the denomination for more than half a century.

What, then, was this sermon, that it should wake echoes to resound so far? The kernel of it was this: that the permanent element in Christianity is con-

tained in the teaching of Jesus, which stands on its own intrinsic merits, needs no miraculous confirmation, and would still stand firm even though it were proved that Jesus had never lived. The South Boston Sermon, therefore, simply took the transcendental principle of the Divinity School Address, and gave it concrete application, and by elaboration and abundant illustration brought directly before the popular mind what had hitherto mostly occupied scholars, critics, and theologians. But the protracted fever of internal controversy that after this infection so long wasted the Unitarian body, was located not so much in the question about the evidential value of miracles in contrast with the self-evidence of Christian truth, as in the derived question as to what is essential to Christianity, and who may be regarded as Christians. The germ of it was bred from conflict between the claims of perfectly free inquiry on the one hand, and the limitations of supernatural revelation on the other.

In spite of intense opposition, the infection of Radicalism spread slowly, invisibly, yet irresistibly. The alarm of the Executive Committee of the American Unitarian Association, in the face of the rising tide of radical opinion, led them in 1853 to go to greater lengths than ever before or since in the direction of a creed, and graduates of the Divinity School were narrowly watched and listed according to their supposed attitude on the question. But all efforts were to no purpose. By 1860 some twenty-five of the ministers were counted clearly to have adopted the radical

position, and among them a number of the ablest of the younger generation, while many others had at least a partial sympathy with it; and by 1863 the radicals were said to have reached a dangerous numerical influence at the Autumnal Convention. During the period of the Civil War, however, the whole controversy gradually receded into the background, for various causes. Far vaster issues claimed the interest of even the theologians; the older participants in the controversy were passing away, while the younger generation could not be brought to the same pitch of concern about it; the "Origin of Species" in the field of science, and "Essays and Reviews," Colenso's "Pentateuch," and Renan's "Life of Jesus" in that of religious criticism, were transforming much of the background of theology. So that when the war was over, it was discovered that the radical controversy, in its old form at least, had faded out of sight. Though many still believed in miracles as facts of history, belief in them was no longer seriously urged as a test of one's Christianity. The Liberal Movement had taken another step forward, and had now freed itself forever from subservience to the authority of scriptural tradition.

The steps thus far reviewed have marked a steady and consistent progress in the direction of spiritual freedom; but that this freedom was by no means completely achieved even as yet, became clearly evident with the movement for closer and more effective ecclesiastical organization in a National Conference in 1865. The very first question offered for settlement

concerned the basis of organization and the conditions of membership; and here the specter of the Radical again appeared. The conservative party, still strongly in the majority, were by do means disposed to trust the denomination to the full consequences resulting from perfectly free inquiry in religion. An attempt was therefore made at the first session to commit the Conference to a creed as a test of membership in it. This was at once tabled; but certain phrases having strong creedal implications were adopted in the Constitution, and led to a new phrase of controversy, which in one form or another lasted for just short of thirty years. An effort was made by the radicals the following year to free the Constitution from dogmatic implications, but it was rejected two to one; whereupon many of them withdrew and the next year formed the Free Religious Association. A half-hearted attempt was made to conciliate them at the next meeting; but by 1870 the conservatives were again aggressively to the fore, and though decisively defeated in an effort to bring about the adoption of a creed by the American Unitarian Association in the spring they did secure at the Conference that autumn the substitution of an article in the Constitution, intended to be more than ever a bar to radical encroachment. A movement was even seriously urged for organizing an Evangelical Unitarian Association to offset the growing influence of the Free Religious Association. This marked the extreme point of reactionary tendencies; and from that time forth the drift was steady and sure toward broader liberty, until in

1882 the Constitution was at length made in spirit, what in 1894 it also became in letter, truly expressive of perfect religious freedom. This is the briefest and barest summary of an internal conflict which in its time shook American Unitarianism to its foundations, and was followed throughout with the most intense interest; but whose story in detail most men to-day could read only with weariness of mind and heart. It was the final attempt to make some sort of Christian confession, witnessed by the acceptance of certain words or phrases that were fairly enough characterized as shibboleths, the test and condition of fellowship with the organized Liberal Movement.

In the National Conference, however, the result I have just mentioned was hardly reached by conscious processes; for there were years together during which the matter was in abeyance, and settlement was at length reached to no small degree simply because the differences had been outgrown. It was in the Western Unitarian Conference instead that the issue as to unqualified freedom of fellowship was most exhaustively threshed out by a protracted and searching discussion of the fundamental principles involved; and no account of the Liberal Movement would be complete which did not take note of this phase of its development. The Western Conference had been formed in 1852, and almost from the start had shown itself more independent of traditions than similar organizations in the East. Radicalism of various forms found early expression there, and there had been a steady drift in the radical direction ever since the Civil War.

In the period of the conservative reaction in the National Conference the Western Conference had already expressed its protest, and had declared that "it conditioned its fellowship on no dogmatic tests;" but it was not until the mid-eighties that controversy became acute. In 1885 the controversy, which had by now largely died out in the East, broke out in a new form in the West, when it was persistently urged that the Conference ought to avow a specifically theistic and Christian basis. Into the running debate that followed for several years, doubtless the sharpest in the whole history of the Liberal Movement, I shall not try to go; for processes are less to my present purpose than are results. The whole controversy was aggravated more than was necessary, and the contrast of positions was made to seem more irreconcilable than it need have been. The two parties did not see face to face, nor agree with each other as to what was the precise issue between them. To the one it presented itself as a choice between Christianity and a mere ethics undeserving the name of religion at all. The other insisted that the issue was as to whether an implication of doctrinal beliefs, even the fewest and most fundamental, should be made compulsory as a condition of fellowship. Theoretically the issue was whether Christian belief and worship are an end in themselves, or are a means to an ultimate end in character; whether religion is fundamentally an inner experience, or fundamentally an outer life. Psychologically it was whether religion is to focus in the intellect and the emotions, or in the

will. Practically it was whether a religious organization is primarily to be formed about a belief or about a purpose, a common point of view or a common end of action. It was the latter of these two interpretations that prevailed in the Western Conference in 1886. Action substantially equivalent had been taken at the National Conference four years previously; and the action of the Conference in 1894 may be looked upon as the final ratification. In the interval the Western Conference had, a little tardily it is true, yet perhaps as soon as could reasonably have been expected, at length given expression to the religious convictions it had all along held but refused to impose, by going further than any Unitarian body had yet ventured to go in the way of setting forth a full statement of "The Things Most Commonly Believed To-day Among Us," and by declaring it furthermore to be 'its general aim and purpose to promulgate a religion in general harmony' therewith. Thus the claims of entire freedom of thought in religion, and of constructive religious purpose, were both recognized and harmonized. The ultimate step had been accomplished toward making the Liberal Movement deserving of its name.

If we are now to seek for a sermon which shall represent this fourth stage of development in the movement we have been following, I think I can point to no other so adequate as one on "The Faith of Ethics and the Thought of God," preached in 1889 by William Channing Gannett, and nobly fulfilling any expectations of spiritual insight combined with

spiritual freedom, which his name of Channing might arouse. This sermon has never, I fancy, at least outside the Western Conference, become so well known or so much appreciated as it deserves; but it seems to me not only to mark an epoch, as I have intimated, but also to rank with the best religious classics of the time for the depth of its spiritual insight and the breadth of its sympathy. Spoken at a time when much had been argued to set ethics down as inferior, and in a sense almost hostile, to religion, it maintains the thesis that the two are at the heart of them identical. And it does this not by paring religion away until it is "mere morality," but by broadening out and deepening the concept of ethics until it is seen to be full of (often unrealized) religion, thus extending the very sway of God and the field of religion over the humblest and commonest events of daily life. "'Ethics,' thought *out*," it says with re-iterated emphasis, "is 'religious' thought; ethics felt *out*, is 'religious' feeling; ethics lived *out*, is the 'religious' life."

After war, however much prolonged, cometh at length peace, however slow in coming. I have reviewed the broken record of eighty years of conflict for unhampered liberty of spirit; and now the Liberal Movement has enjoyed more than twenty years of peace, not again to be disturbed, we may trust, by any revival of issues at length brought to happy settlement. Can we find any word to interpret to us the present stage of the movement, as the four sermons I have cited interpret the four stages of its

past? "Nothing can become a clear object of our thought," Martineau somewhere observes, "while we ourselves are in it; we understand not our childhood, till we have left it; our youth, till it has departed; our life itself, till it verges to its close." And yet while we wait for the future to pass its unerring judgment upon the present may we not listen to a contemporary judgment? It was pronounced in 1900 upon the fitting occasion of the seventy-fifth anniversary of the American Unitarian Association, by Professor Francis Greenwood Peabody. In his sermon on "The Church of the Spirit," Professor Peabody interprets the inner significance of this movement in terms of Mysticism. This interpretation may not even yet be generally recognized as giving the central and vital meaning of the movement we have been tracing; even as this sermon, for lack of controversy to focus attention upon it, has not as yet, I think, won general recognition as one of the epoch-marking sermons of the movement it represents. Yet I have long felt, and I have been glad to find others sharing the feeling, that we have here the best interpretation we have ever had of what the Liberal Movement has come to, and of what it may hope in future to realize more fully with every added year. Such an interpretation, indeed, had been partially anticipated long before by Neander in his History of Dogma. After speaking of Socinianism as a one-sided movement, he continues by saying that if it took the path of the understanding it led to Rationalism; but that it could also take that of the feelings, and then it

assumed the form of Mysticism. The history of the past century now warrants us in adding that the Liberal Movement has shown these two paths coming together; that it has at length become both rational and mystical, and the more inevitably mystical precisely because it is rational and free.

And how natural it is that this should be so! that a movement whose successive stages of development have each been marked by struggles to set the life of the spirit free from bonds, should, now that these have been done away, leave men's souls again open to the immediate vision of God. This Mysticism is but the fulfillment of the prophecy in Emerson's Address, echoed in Parker's Sermon, and repeatedly sung by the poets who give this form of religious faith its highest expression, and who more and more confirm the mystic's mood in us as we sing their hymns. For it is no accident that from those whose spirits had most fully cast off all bonds and thus reached the mystic's mount of vision, and whom their own time called radical, there should have come so large a proportion of our finest and devoutest hymns: from Johnson, Longfellow, Chadwick, Gannett, Hosmer, and their spiritual kin, all of them pronounced radicals, and all of them clearly mystics.

How profound and revolutionary in their meaning the religious changes embodied in these hundred years of the Liberal Movement have been! We have traced the development of a movement emancipating the spirit successively from the bondage of creed, from the limiting authority of texts of Scripture,

from the incubus of miracle, from the compulsion of tradition, and from subjection to shibboleths of word or phrase, until nothing imposed by other men or another age need dim or distort God's direct revelation of himself to the soul of man, nor stand in the way of man's immediate access to the spirit of God. We have witnessed the steadily increasing reliance upon the principle of reason instead of dogma, upon the intuitions of the soul rather than the traditions of men, as the highest interpreters and best witnesses of the truth and will of God; until Scripture is now re-interpreted simply as the classical record of men's loftiest religious experiences, and the prophets and Jesus, the Apostles and Saints, are viewed afresh simply as supreme illustrations of how man may walk with God, and God may dwell in man. These principles have been followed out to their logical conclusion most completely in the Liberal Movement of which I have spoken, although it is not entitled to claim any exclusive monopoly of them; for a liberal movement is in progress in various stages of advancement, in all churches. But an adequate account of that belongs to some other hour than this, and to a more competent hand than mine.

In what I have said I have spoken only of the progress toward freedom in religious thought, not of progress in the outward expressions of religious life. Yet religious freedom is after all but a bare permissive condition, empty as one of Kant's categories, a mere prelude to something beyond. It is little worth the struggle unless it lead to more abundant life for men

and for man. If I may now for a moment before I close abandon the province of the historian, I should like to take the risk of forecasting what this something beyond may be. If it can not yet be predicted with confidence what the next step forward will be, it seems to me easy at least to declare what it logically should be, if the freedom already won is to be justified. For is not the next step already implied in the one last taken; in the realization that the aim of religion is henceforth to be construed not as dogmatic, but as ethical: and that religious organizations are to be formed about not a common belief but a common purpose? Let us hope, therefore, that when the historian of a future generation comes to make the final characterization of the present stage of the Liberal Movement, he will be able to declare that it was not only characterized within, as has already been discerned, by a mystical attitude of the soul, but above all else was also distinguished by an unexampled application of religion to every field and phase of personal and social life. Is not the Liberal Movement to-day, however uncertainly and falteringly, already groping its way well in among the duties and opportunities of this next stage of ethicized and socialized religion as the plain path along which to advance the Kingdom of God?

In one of the most suggestive of the New Testament narratives, we read of how one who had all his life long chafed under bondage to the Law, had a marvelous experience, after which it seemed to him as though scales had fallen from his eyes. He had

seen a vision from heaven, and he was not disobedient unto it. And through his obedience he bore to a decadent world a gospel which at length transformed its whole life. The Liberal Movement likewise has embodied a progressive experience of release from spiritual bondage. Its seers, at least, have with clear sight seen the mystic's vision of God in immediate relation with men. The future of the movement rests entirely upon how faithfully those who share in it are obedient to what is involved and implied in that vision.

UNITARIANISM IN AMERICA

A History of Its Origin and Development

By George Willis Cooke, Member of the American Historical Association, American Association for the Advancement of Science, American Academy of Political and Social Science, etc.

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THE LAND OF PROMISE

BY

MAXWELL SAVAGE

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The American Unitarian Association was Founded in 1825 with the Following Expressed Purpose

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*The General Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, passed the following vote at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man."

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

THE LAND OF PROMISE

BY MAXWELL SAVAGE

To begin with, what is a church? A church is an outer and visible sign of an inner and spiritual reality in man. It exists primarily to keep alive and increase the spiritual meaning and substance of life; to keep men conscious of the fact that, after all is said and done, they are spirit and have bodies; to keep men awake to the solid practical fact that spiritual values are more precious than things and than life itself; to keep alive the sacredness and holiness of life, the sense of awe and imagination and reverence; to show men that God has planned their lives along long lines, not short ones, and that those lines run toward high and eternal purposes without which life is meaningless; to keep before men the practical, prose, common sense of the poetic question, "What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

And let us disabuse our minds of the old-fashioned idea that in joining a church we thereby profess to become members of a close corporation of saints, of people who claim to know it all and to have taken the final step in "salvation." To join a church should mean that we have by our own choice become members of a group of learners, beginners, searchers, who do not commit themselves to any fixed intellectual

creed but to a moral purpose; who pledge themselves to discard whatever belief they discover to be false, and to accept whatever they become convinced is true; who see that they cannot help God directly, but can help on the work of God by helping their fellowmen.

Now some people do not join any church even though they may believe in the essential spirituality of life. They fail to realize that if a cause is to be efficient in this world it must have a strong body. They remind me of those who tell their minister on Monday that they were "with him yesterday in spirit." That sounds well and is acceptable only if the obstacle to church attendance was insurmountaable; it does not make for power in a religious cause. The spirit must have a vehicle as steam and electricity must have machinery. Religion must also have a theology. It must cease wasting the energies of men in the by-paths of superstition and claims of infallibility, and express itself in the light of all the truth we have. In other words, beliefs are essential to intelligence. As with science, so with religion, we believe certain things as the result of human experience, and, as with science, so with religion, we have faith in certain things not yet a part of recorded knowledge. As with science, so with religion, we must be willing to give up beliefs disproved, not sullenly but gladly, as released to renew the search for truth, loving God not only with heart and soul and strength, but with *mind!*

And may we Unitarians take ourselves in hand and

once for all cease this vague and superficial saying that "It does not make any difference what you believe as long as you behave yourself." We have sown the wind along that line and are reaping to-day the whirlwind of disloyalty to our Cause. Seekers have come to us hungry for knowledge of what we believe, where we stand. We have not fed them. We have given them who asked for the bread of life the stone of that living death, indefiniteness. We have given them no hitching post, and the average man needs one. Our young people in many cases have drifted away. Why should they not, when not only parents but many ministers have taken this attitude? We need to repent of and turn from this to the fact that "as a man thinks (believes) so is he." Would you put your children or yourself in the hands of a physician or surgeon who held lightly the beliefs of his profession, saying that they made no difference as long as doctors were good husbands or fathers or voters? The German General Staff and its blind slaves act as they do because they believe certain things. Jesus lived and died as he did because he believed opposite things. So let us shake off this lethargy that we have called "tolerance" and though still practicing the precept, "live and let live," let us realize that superficial good nature plus careless thinking is mere drifting in a world where steering is needed! All paths do not go to the top of the mountain. Some end in the valley. Some go round and round forever. Some end in a squirrel-track, and that, in turn, up a tree. Thought is essential to

man on the road to the City of God. Beliefs are necessities, and a handful of reasonably assured facts is a sensible possession for your own guidance and for that of others. Better be a bit narrow and definite than liberal in a "loose" sense, for truth is not an indulgent taskmaster.

In my own mind of late I have divided the western world of organized religion into three countries. First, "Catholicism," which is the ancient Roman Empire without territorial limits, inhabited by those of a dynastic autocratic attitude of mind in so far as religion is concerned. They owe allegiance to an absolute monarchy and live under the rule of external authority. Most of its citizens are loyal to it, either in spirit or by the letter of the laws it lays down. "God to them is a King, Jesus is a Prince, Mary is a Queen. Their representatives are either Princes of the Church or servitors thereof." There is steady emigration from that country as the democratic spirit grows. There is distinct division there between the Liberals and the Ultra-Montanes. Still it is an autocracy.

Second, "Protestantism," as officially understood, is still "orthodox." I believe it is perfectly fair that a man should expect to be judged by the sign he hangs out. If I see a sign in front of a store advertising certain articles for sale within, am I not justified in expecting to find them there? And should not business ethics hold in the advertising of articles of faith?

Protestantism I compare to a limited monarchy,

made up of many states (sects), each claiming certain states-rights which are of no more intrinsic importance than many of the "rights" claimed by our separate states to-day. Yet all owe allegiance to certain central ideas. What are these ideas to which the citizens of that country profess allegiance? The Bible, the "Word of God," is a final court of appeal for all religious questions. In the Bible they find a "final," "infallible," "revealed" religion in which the metaphysical Christ is the central figure, semi-monarchial, ruling by external authority. Their theology is Christo-centric, while God, though still a King, seems shorn of some of his power. Of their system of official theological thought the Fall of Man is the keystone. The whole structure is built to that. Remove it and all the rest drops. If there was no "fall" there is no need of the rest. There was no "fall." Enough said.

The phraseology of that country is still monarchial and orthodox, although the thoughts, feelings and attitudes of its citizens differ all the way from irresponsible liberalism to claims as dogmatic as those of any Cardinal. But, by and large, their minds still cling to external authority, to salvation by proxy, and to the importance of belief in inherited creeds. And yet Henry Ward Beecher said he would as soon go courting with his father's love letters as join a church simply because his father had belonged to it.

I find, and I say this with no unkindness, that many of the citizens of that country apologize in conversation for their creeds, that is, for the Protestant

basis of belief, saying, "But of course I don't believe in such and such." The men who laid down those bases were convinced unto death. And what moral right have people to-day to profess them publicly if they do not believe them privately? "Truth defensive hath lost hold on God." And one of the great troubles with the world to-day is the glaring difference between the actual and the professed beliefs of people in touch with the churches. Intellectual honesty is called for by the times. Supposing a man in Wall Street should say to his friends, "I am in a position to know and I believe such and such a stock will go up," and his friends should invest in it and it should go down. Suppose then they waited on him bodily for an explanation and he should sit back and say, "I said that, but I put my own private interpretation on it." Would he last long in his business? Then why should churches last if they allow the same thing? Intellectual dishonesty, even though well intended, weakens and finally destroys confidence. I am convinced that that is one reason why the average man has lost confidence in many of the churches. Huxley created a powerful phrase. He called this juggling with meanings a "debasing of the verbal coinage of the world." It is debased every time a man, lacking the courage of conviction, says one thing when he inwardly means something different. Nor is that debasing confined by any means to the land of Protestantism. There is danger wherever men put the institution ahead of what they, individually, know as truth.

Is there emigration from that country? Yes! Some emigrate into the barren waste of speculation where they are "stript of the warm garment" of faith of any sort. Some go back to the old country of Catholicism and become anti-democratic in religion. Others wander into the country of agnosticism where there are two states, one occupied by sincere, honest seekers who say "I do not know but I shall go on striving to learn," the other inhabited by those who are as dogmatic as any on earth saying, "I don't know, I can't know, meaning to all intents and purposes "I won't know." Still others, in increasing numbers, emigrate to the democracy of Unitarianism or pure congregationalism.

But one trouble to-day is that so many emulate Nicodemus of old. They have not the courage to come to that in which they believe except when they will not be seen. Many creep, in the twilight, under the fence from one field into the other. I look for the time when, through insistence upon intellectual honesty on the part of the leaders, there will be a great going "over the top" in broad daylight. It would be better for all concerned. To-day too many Protestant ministers are apparently not doctrinally free, are in fear of their deacons and those in authority to give or withhold. Sunday after Sunday they will preach liberal sermons, then suddenly, one old-fashioned in the extreme as to its doctrine, so that no one really knows where they stand. They are like birds tied by the foot; they take flights but they come back to the old perch.

Protestantism has not lived up to the law of Luther, the right of the individual to decide for himself in religious questions. The Reformation opened the Bible. Since then Protestantism, the child of the Reformation, has condemned men for reading what was there. Protestantism claims to have the Gospel. "Gospel" means good news. I ask you, is the "Gospel" as interpreted by either Rome or Protestantism good news to the modern mind or the modern heart? No! Therefore, what do we find? In many Protestant churches, the creed, the Gospel, is shelved, referred to as little as possible, placed in the position of a poor relation while the organization concentrates upon side issues. Is a church fulfilling its purpose, its reason for being, when it shelves its Gospel, its spiritual, theological message, and devotes itself primarily to other things, for the sake of numbers or popularity? I do not think so. And I seriously believe that if the average Protestant churches "stuck to their lasts," that is, to the propaganda of Protestantism as officially understood, they would not draw one half the people they do.

"Nothing that keeps thought out is safe from thought." Rome and Protestanism are on the defensive. Untold thousands of people who have emigrated from the old religious allegiances are without a country. Having forsaken the old they have not taken out even their "first papers" in the new. They know no loyalty to any religious country. Thousands of people have turned to what might be called "mere morality"; they are unconsciously religious in

their service to their fellows. The one weakness of their position is that as "faith without works is dead," so works without faith falls short of the true goal. Thousands of others are consciously irreligious though "men cannot (finally) be God's outlaws if they would." While other thousands want to bear allegiance to some religious land, but are, however unwillingly, mentally and morally at sea.

Now I ask you to turn to the third country I have in mind, that of pure congregationalism, called Unitarianism to-day,—a democracy of the spirit. Many in the other countries belong to it "in spirit," but that does not help very much, nor will it help in any real decisive sense until they emigrate. When religious liberty is finally seen in its importance as civil liberty is seen to-day, when the vision of religious democracy grips the imaginations of men as civil democracy has done, then there will be immigration into this country such as will rejoice the pioneers and all lovers of democracy. For me it is, as Dr. Hedge said long ago, "either Rome or Reason" in religion. Here is the land of reason, of the religion of the spirit as contrasted with the religions of authority, the logical land of the spirit of the Reformation. Is it a new country? No! In all ages and places it has been inhabited by those of a certain attitude of heart and mind and spirit; the seekers, not the docile acceptors; the pioneers, not the followers; those of the prophetic hope, not of the priestly tradition. Abraham became a citizen thereof when he left the little gods of his fathers to find a higher conception of God. The Old

Testament prophets helped to found it by their efforts to turn men's minds and hearts from ritual to righteousness. Jesus, the highest example among men of the value to God and Humanity of freedom in religion, consecrated it. Paul in his refusal to abide by the narrow decisions of the leaders of the Jerusalem church strengthened it. The forward-looking heroes of the Reformation were loyal to it. Francis David, urging religious liberty in far off Transylvania, championed it. The Pilgrims, sacrificing and suffering for religious liberty, were true to its best spirit.

And since their day and since the day of Abraham every man and woman, known or unknown, of every age and place, who has borne witness to some glimpse of God's truth has added value to this land of the free spirit of which we should be proud inheritors.

As I have heard one man say, it is not primarily a land of intellectuals, certain "Unitarians" to the contrary notwithstanding, but the taking of the step of citizenship therein is more often intuitive. Of course, to become a Unitarian one has to do a little thinking, but who would not do that? Here the right of private judgment comes into its own, to its logical conclusion. Here men do what Jesus would have had them do of whom he asked almost impatiently, "Why, of your own selves, judge ye not what is right?"

Once a citizen of this religious country, always a citizen. As once a man becomes imbued with the spirit of free political institutions, he cannot go back and feel at home under an autocracy, so once a man sees and appreciates the spirit of religious democracy,

he cannot again become a loyal citizen of a religious autocracy or monarchy.

Certain "Unitarians" have no more caught fire from the sacred flame of the cause whose name they carry than have certain "Americans" ever glowed with the ideals of this nation. They are to the cause what some "coal" this last winter was to the furnace, material for clinkers! Supposing certain people say, "We are Unitarians but we never or seldom go anywhere," or, "We are Unitarians but we send our children to Saint So and So's church," or, "We were Unitarians but now we go to such and such an orthodox church." Such are not, nor ever have been Unitarians; they have never really caught the meaning of the faith any more than people calling themselves Americans and lacking in loyalty toward their country, have ever been really Americans in their reaction to the faith of this nation.

Now that is not a narrow position to take except in so far as it is a fact that the rigor of truth demands that we shall not meander if we expect to get anywhere. It is possible to be definite and have a distinct goal in mind without being "narrow" in the sectarian sense. That being true, it is high time that we Unitarians recognized our position, gathered up the loose ends of our present attitude, girded our loins, and set out upon the highway that awaits our feet:

The late Admiral Mahan made the statement that "Between Orthodoxy," (Protestantism as officially understood)—and "Unitarianism, there is an impassable gulf." Mr. Ralph Adams Cram in the *Atlantic*

Monthly of February, 1917, wrote "I wish to discriminate here, and I think I can, on the historic basis of fact. Protestants believe Jesus was God. Unitarians do not; therefore, in justice to both, the facts should be recorded that there is a difference." Good! I agree with him and I think that, in justice to ourselves, we should recognize the fact, not in any spirit of the separatist, but for the sake of the fact that "truth is the greater friend."

I urge on all the careful reading of an article entitled "Unitarianism" by Prof. Francis A. Christie of the Meadville Theological School, that the difference may be seen and honored. To me it seems that Unitarianism is the religion of the spirit, democratic, for in its sight the Christianity of Jesus and democracy are interchangeable values. You might say that it is Christianity raised to its highest and simplest common denominator. With Jesus it believes that the seed of the spirit of God is in everyone; therefore it does not limit divinity to one man but includes all men as divine, as capable of growth into the full stature of what it may mean to be a child of God. And I ask you to think of the regenerative power of that truth whenever and wherever applied. In the people with whom Jesus came into contact it worked a miracle, turning "the spirit's water into wine." Their servility and hopelessness disappeared and thenceforth they had a new, enthusiastic respect for life, self-respect, and respect for the spiritual values of a divine humanity. The churches, in the name of Jesus, have limited that divinity; therefore men have

known but little respect for themselves or others. If men caught fire from the truth of that conception propounded by Jesus and held all too limply so far by this "reconception" of his teachings called Unitarianism, there would soon be a new heaven and a new earth wherein wars and the causes of wars would cease. Unitarianism differs in the very promise of its gospel of good news. It welcomes evolution and stands for an up-hill theory of men as against the down-hill theory of Protestantism. It welcomes and abides by the consequences of this position in a wise faith that God is, not just was once upon a time. It stands for the Lawfulness of God as against miracle as popularly understood. It welcomes science as recorded truth but recognizes that, as science does, so it must walk by faith beyond a certain point. But it sees that the part of wisdom lies in walking in the direction toward which science points. It knows that "faith without works is dead." It also knows that works without faith are temporary.

Unitarianism is a "reconception" of Christianity to such a degree, that to all intents and purposes, with its acceptance of the scientific method in religion, it is a new departure, a new Christian dispensation bringing a new heaven and a new earth to those who harken. Its mission is to strengthen the powerhouses of its faith which are already established, and to carry the heat and light and power of its teachings to the hundreds of thousands of seekers who are no longer loyal citizens of the lands of Catholicism or Protestanism. They are unnumbered, those who no

longer owe any religious allegiance. They thirst for the spiritual waters, though often they know not for what they thirst and seek to slake that thirst at other streams. They need and want, though often they know not what they want, the universal and eternally modern religion of Jesus, the simple reconciliation of religion and ethics in the light of modern knowledge. They need, as we all need, to love God with heart and soul and strength and mind and their neighbors as themselves, and, as they recognize the need, comes the desire. We can offer to such as these a religious country where that desire is at least allowed for by the law, and inculcated in the constitution.

Now it seems to me that this Unitarianism deserves our loyalty, our good-will, our co-operation and our substance. Most of us have inherited it, as most of us have inherited that other value, political democracy. It is not ours merely to have and to hold but also to give or to lose. It should create in us the missionary spirit, not intolerant of what others may believe, yet eager to share with them what we believe, this practical regenerating vision of God as the spiritual Father, loving and righteous, God by the fact that he is the great Servant of all; this church which is not Christo-centric but which centers all in God as did Jesus himself; this faith which recognizes the divinity of humanity and looks to Jesus as the natural top-most blossom of the human tree of which God is the Life-Spirit; this Christian conception which, recognizing no childish horror called Hell, or childish bliss called Heaven, yet points men to more terrible

hells than the old, hells created by the inherited brute traits of men; and points to the heavens which are and shall be created wherever and whenever men harken to the Laws and Love of God; this faith which points to men a Salvation not from inherent sin but from inherited ignorance, a salvation not gained alone or without labor but earned by service, and at great price; therein lies its value.

Let us remember that we do not break the Laws of God in any realm. We do not even dent them; they break us; therefore the part of wisdom is to learn and obey.

We have not so much a "problem of evil" as a "problem of good." Where did good come from, we wonder perhaps, as we look down and back over the ages. Even as the seed is within each one of us, there at the beginning, "in the midst of the grossness and slag, nestled the seed Perfection."

This faith throws the light of hope through effort on the path of life, that by dedication and devotion on men's part to co-operation with God, the "wheat" of life may so spread that some day there will be no room for the "tares." In the meantime, held and upheld by such high faith, there can be no "pain so sharp but wakes the soul to secret laughter."

Now, the faith of this free religious country demands new and more definite expression and phraseology. It needs to be pictured, storyfied in positive terms to the modern mind and imagination. I for one am weary of negation, of re-interpreting texts and phrases to mean something their authors

did not intend, of services that after all smack too much of imitation, of trying "to ope the Future's portals with the Past's blood-rusted key."

Unitarianism should take a dignified stand, modern and yet deeply reverential, and stop waiting upon orthodoxy. Let us cease this hope that if we go about saying that there is "really no difference," certain liberal orthodox people may emigrate to our country. They would, deep down and inside, respect us far more if we stated the positive difference and proved to them its value. As it is, all too often, seekers come to us and by their coming bear silent witness to the fact that they are asking for bread (they want to know why we are, what we have to offer, whether we have a spiritual interpretation fit for modern consumption) and they go away having received the stone either of imitation of what they have left or of that loose type of liberalism which evades, apologizes, or explains away. The genuine seeker wishes from the pulpit neither the material with which he is furnished by the daily papers and magazines, nor vague, unconvinced theology. He wants spiritual meanings of things as they are to-day. We should be ready to take the consequences of a definite Unitarian stand. I believe they would be large and good. We need the logic of courage to stand for all that this new conception and conviction in religion may mean. It is high time we cleared the clearings. Others, gone before, felled the trees and rooted out most of the stumps. We have tended to let them grow up again to brush. Our work is to

clear, cultivate, plant and harvest the Unitarian lands for the sake of a humanity which after all is what it believes concerning God and Man.

What has this to do with the War which is in all minds? Everything! For if men held and lived this faith predatory instincts would wither and die. But men cannot live a faith, a belief, until they hold it, and the least we can do is to offer it as persuasively as possible.

THE American Unitarian Association is the working missionary organization of the Unitarian churches of America. It seeks to promote sympathy and united action among Liberal Christians, and to spread the principles which are believed by Unitarians to be essential to civil and religious liberty and progress and to the attainments of the spiritual life. To this end it supports missionaries, establishes and maintains churches, holds conventions, aids in building meeting-houses, publishes, sells and gives away books, sermons, tracts, hymn-books, and devotional works.

A list of free tracts will be sent on application. A full descriptive catalogue of the publications of the Association. including doctrinal, devotional and practical works, will be sent to all who apply.

The Association is supported by the voluntary contributions of churches and individuals.

There are two forms of membership in this Association provided for those who desire to cooperate in the spread of liberal religious thought and influence :

I. *Life Membership.* Any individual may, by the payment of $50, become a *Life Member* of the American Unitarian Association. Such a person is entitled to vote at all business meetings, to receive the Year Book and Annual Report, and, by means of frequent communications, is kept in touch with the various enterprises promoted by the Association.

II. *Associate Membership.* Other individuals desiring to affiliate with the Association may become *Associate Members* by signing an application card (sent upon request) and the payment of $1.00. As such they will receive a certificate of *Associate Membership,* also *Unitarian Word and Work* (the monthly magazine reporting denominational news), each new pamphlet as it is issued, and occasional other communications from Headquarters.

Address communications and contributions to the

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THE GOD WHO CARES

BY
JABEZ T. SUNDERLAND, D.D.

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The American Unitarian Association was Founded in 1825 with the Following Expressed Purpose

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*The General Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, passed the following vote at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man."

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

THE GOD WHO CARES.

"Speak to Him thou, for He hears, and
Spirit with Spirit can meet,—
Closer is He than breathing, and
Nearer than hands and feet."

—*Tennyson.*

We live in an age of science and reason. We live in an age when it is well understood that the processes of nature go on according to law. In such an age is there any legitimate place for prayer?

There are some who answer, No.

There are persons, persons of intelligence, who would cast out all prayer, as a superstition, a wholly irrational and foolish thing. Others would not entirely reject prayer, but would limit it to meditation and aspiration,—condemning everything beyond these. Still others,—and these are many,—are in uncertainty and confusion of mind about the whole matter, not knowing what to believe.

Under such circumstances it is easy to see that the need is great for a candid and careful study of the subject, that we may find out where there is firm ground on which to stand.

One thing becomes clear as soon as we begin really to think on the subject at all; and that is, that among thoughtful men, who believe in science and a world governed by law, many of those ideas of prayer which came into existence in ancient times, before the uniformity of nature's operation was found

out, and while yet God was believed to rule the world in purely arbitrary ways, must be revised. In place of these necessarily more or less crude and imperfect conceptions of the nature and functions of prayer, it is important that we should get others more in harmony with God's real method of governing the universe, and with all the facts of nature.

Nor need we fear. When once men come to understand what true prayer is, and what it is not; in other words, when once they adjust their religious thinking to the enlarged knowledge of the modern world, I do not, for one, see any grounds for believing that the necessary or the legitimate result is to weaken faith in prayer. Rather do I believe that never did the reasonableness, the value and the need of true prayer more clearly appear, than under the light of the highest intelligence and the profoundest thinking of our time.

Let me give reasons for so believing.

Perhaps I can best do this by beginning with the negative side of the subject, and describing briefly the kinds of prayer which I do not believe in, because modern thought seems to me to have outgrown them. This done, I shall be the better ready to take up the positive side, pointing out what kinds of prayer I do believe in, and why.

1. To proceed, then, I do not believe in any prayer whose object, or any part of whose object, is to give God information, to enlighten him regarding our wants, or to instruct him as to the best way of carrying on the affairs of the world. Yet there are many prayers offered which seem to have just this

object in view. Perhaps the best comments to make on such prayers, are those searching questions of the prophet Isaiah:

"Who hath directed the spirit of the Lord,
Or being His counsellor hath taught Him?
With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him,
And taught Him in the path of judgment,
And gave Him knowledge,
And showed Him the way of understanding?"

If any of us are wiser than God, we may, perhaps, with some reason indulge in this kind of prayer. If not, it is plain that the sooner we dispense with it the better.

2. Again, I do not believe in any prayer that is offered as in any sense a substitute for work. That is to say, I do not believe in the lazy asking of God to do for us what we ought to do for ourselves.

Once when they were on a journey in the desert, a companion of Mohammed said to the prophet, as they stopped at night: "I will not tie my camel, but will commit him to God." Replied the prophet: "Tie thy camel, and then commit him to God."

That was the true view of prayer. God is not our drudge. Prayer is not power whereby we can secure the boon of idleness for ourselves. To ask God to do for us what we ought to do for ourselves is not to honor but to insult Him.

3. Further, I do not believe in any prayer or invocation or offering or other transaction with God, the object of which is to get God in any sense into human power, or to compel Him by the use of forms,

or rites, or a magic name, or by importunity, to do what He does not wish to do.

The Brahmins of India believe that by practicing austerities, and repeating prayers and sacred words from the Vedas, and by offering sacrifices, one can get the gods to almost any extent into one's power, and compel them to do one's bidding. There is a somewhat similar notion regarding prayer and sacraments and sacred rights, found widely among Christian peoples,—the notion that a sort of mystical charm resides in these which will bring supernatural results to the one who is able to avail himself of it. Thus many priests claim that by the use of certain forms and prayers they can change bread and wine into the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ; and many a simple-minded woman believes that the effect of counting her beads so many times is to give her so many merits up in heaven; and not a few earnest and devout but short-sighted and credulous women and men believe that by pleading the magical merits of Christ's name they may always, when they need, obtain coal and potatoes and bread.

Now I say, this idea of prayer, which makes it a sort of hand whereby we may reach up and lay hold upon certain hidden potencies of divine magic, to use them for our selfish advantage, I do not believe in. It seems to me a degradation of prayer to conceive of it in such a light. These things all have their place in legends and in the superstitions of the Middle Ages; but they do not have any proper place in the religion of our enlightened age. We want truth, not dreams; realities, not credulities.

4. Again, I do not believe in any theory of prayer that expects God to set aside wise laws, by which He regulates the affairs of the universe, to accommodate men's short-sighted notions or selfish desires.

It is easy to see that if God allowed one man, or set of men, to have rain for their mere praying for it, and another, dry weather for their praying for that; and an army to secure victory by praying for victory; and a farmer to get good crops by praying for them; and a merchant to grow rich by praying for wealth; and the sick man to recover by praying for health; and the living to be delivered from death by so praying, and so on, the result would be simply to turn this world from a law-governed world into one not governed at all; indeed, it would be to plunge the world at once from order into chaos and ruin. Certainly, I cannot, for one, accept any theory of prayer, or believe that the growing intelligence of the world will accept any, that means this or anything like this. I cannot believe in any prayer that interferes with a law-governed universe, or that does not rise to the height of seeing that law itself is only another name for God's rectitude, and fidelity, and goodness and love.

So much, then, for the negative side of my thought, or the kinds of prayer that I am not able to accept. I come now to the positive,—the kinds of prayer that I believe to be wholly justified by modern knowledge, as well as by the deepest intuitions and needs of the human soul.

What ought we to mean by the word "prayer?" Should we mean merely petition, merely asking for

things? That is perhaps what is oftenest meant; but I think it is much too narrow a signification. Prayer, understood in the large way in which it ought to be understood, I am sure should include a great deal besides petition. Indeed, so far is petition from being all of prayer, that it is a question if it be even the most important part.

Certain it is, that as prayer rises to its best, and as men rise to their best, so that prayer becomes to them more and more an habitual attitude of mind, the petition element tends to become less prominent, and other elements come forward to take its place. It is easy to have prayer, and prayer that is very noble, very sweet, very profound in its sincerity, and very helpful, without petition at all. For example, how could the spirit of prayer be more perfectly breathed than in the following poetical lines?

O Love Divine, of all that is
  The sweetest and the best!
Fain would I come and rest to-day
  Upon Thy faithful breast;
And yet the spirit in my heart
  Says, 'Wherefor should I pray
That Thou should'st seek me with Thy love,
  Since Thou dost seek alway?'

I would not have Thee otherwise
  Than what Thou still must be;
Yes, Thou art God, and what Thou art
  Is ever best for me.
And so, for all my sighs, my heart
  Doth sing itself to rest,
O Love Divine, most far and near,
  Upon Thy faithful breast.*

Here is prayer, perhaps as pure and devout and

*John White Chadwick.

lofty as the soul can know; and yet it is so far from being made up of petition, that it does not even include petition. It is simply a prayer of love, adoration, gratitude, trust. Let no one misunderstand me as saying that I think petition is not proper. Made for right objects, and in a right spirit, I think it is proper, wholly rational and important. But it is not an essential in prayer.

When I say I believe in prayer, I mean I believe in at least five things, as all included in prayer, in the large and full sense of that word, outside of and besides petition. Let me name them:

1. I believe in thankfulness or gratitude to the Infinite Source of all good,—to the Giver of my life and of all the blessings that make my life rich,—to the giver of my dear ones, and all the good that has come to them. And why should I not be thus grateful? I should think myself less than a man if I were not grateful to my fellows for their kindnesses to me. Then am I not less than a man if I do not teach myself to be grateful to the greatest Benefactor I have? Thus I think it is easy to see that the prayer of gratitude—the prayer which is the sincere utterance of a thankful heart—is natural, is reasonable, is in every way most fitting.

2. Another kind of prayer which seems to me wholly rational, is the prayer of adoration, reverence, awe, worship, in the presence of the great manifestations of God's power and wisdom and grandeur in Nature. It is the feeling which comes over me when I stand in the presence of Niagara, of the sea, of the starry heavens at night. It is the same feeling which

the ancient Psalmist had when he exclaimed reverently:

> "The heavens declare the glory of God,
> And the firmament showeth His handiwork.
> Day unto day uttereth speech,
> And night unto night showeth knowledge.
>
> O Lord, how manifold are Thy works,
> In wisdom hast Thou made them all."

I see not how one can go through this marvelous world without such feelings coming to him by day and by night, ten thousand times over. And I can conceive of nothing more natural or right than that these feelings, when they come, should seek expression, as they have ever done, in the language of adoration and worship.

3. Again, akin to the feeling of adoration in the presence of Nature, is what we may call the soul's communion with Nature. Who has not had such communion, in the fields, in the woods, in the mountains, in the gathering twilight alone, in the still midnight? What was that communion? It was not intercourse with the mere matter around, regarded as unintelligent and dead. No, it was communion with Nature alive, and penetrated with a marvelous intelligence. It was communion with the Soul of Nature, with that Universal Spirit whose wonderful and ever-changing time-garment Nature is. It was communion with God in Nature.

Nor is man's communion with God awakened by external nature alone. It may be awakened by man. He who finds the deepest that is in his brother, finds God. He who journeys inward to the deepest sanctities of his own soul, finds God. Here wait for us

all, communings as sweet and holy as we can know in this world.

Now all this comes within the province of prayer, rightly understood. All this communion of the soul with its own deeper self, that is with the God within; and all this communion of the soul with external nature, that is, with the God without, is worship—is prayer. We should always teach ourselves to think of prayer as including all this. And if we do, it will help us to see the grounds for prayer; the reasonableness of prayer; for surely all this is reasonable if any action of the soul can be reasonable.

4. Still further, prayer means aspiration. It means a vision of the unattained, and a desire to reach it. It means a recognition of the ideal shining above one, and a longing to make it one's own. "Be ye perfect," said Jesus, "even as your Father in Heaven is perfect."

To look upward and see the divine perfection, and to feel the divineness of it, and to press toward it, is the noblest of prayers. Yes, and the most reasonable; for what can be so reasonable as to desire and to strive for the best?

5. One more kind of prayer there is, before we reach petition. It is the prayer of trust; trust of ourselves and all our interests in the hands of the Infinite Wisdom and Care that is over us; trust of our dear ones in the keeping of One who must love them even more than we do; trust of the world in the hands of Him who made it — sure that He means it well, and that somehow and somewhere He will make "good to be the final goal of ill."

The value, the preciousness of such a trust, when it exists in the human soul, money cannot measure; and wherever it is found nothing is more natural than for it to seek expression.

I trust it is now plain how large and many-sided and rich a thing is prayer, entirely aside from petition. All the realms of thankfulness, of reverence, of communion, of aspiration and of trust are open to it, and would be even if one never asked anything at all. And how beautiful and glorious are these realms! How great is the loss suffered by all those who do not repair thither often, to breathe their diviner air!

"Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwelleth in you?"
"Devoutly look, and nought but wonders shall pass by thee;
Devoutly read, and then all books shall edify thee;
Devoutly speak, and men devoutly listen to thee;
Devoutly act, and then the strength of God acts through thee."

I come now to petition—that kind of prayer which asks for something. It is here that most men find their greatest difficulty in making prayer seem reasonable. Some say, Why ask for anything? Will not God give what he wants us to have, anyway, whether we ask or not? Others say, He cannot give anything, no matter how much we ask Him, because He rules by law; therefore why go through the farce of asking?

Let us see if we can find any light upon these difficulties.

There are two kinds of things that may be asked for in prayer. One is temporal or physical good; the other is spiritual good. Let us look first at the spiritual, concerning which the difficulties are least.

Indeed, I think there are no difficulties here at all. Such as there seem to be, arise from surface-looking. The truth is, in spiritual things asking and receiving are not different and opposite; they are the same. Really to ask is to begin to receive. When we ask God for any physical good, without putting forth physical effort to obtain it, we are asking him to violate his physical laws to accommodate our wish. But, when we ask for spiritual good, there is no violation of law involved. For it is the law of our being that the first step toward receiving spiritual good must be desire for such good. We must open our minds and hearts that it may come in. What is the way to get love, or purity of heart, or unselfishness, or sympathy for others, or a forgiving spirit, or any other grace of the soul? The first step must be consciousness of our lack, and the next must be desire. But this is just what prayer is. It is the mind concentrating its attention upon, and reaching earnestly after, the things that it feels the lack of, the things that are above it. Thus praying for spiritual good is not contrary to law; it is putting ourselves into harmony with law. It is availing ourselves of the power of spiritual law to reach the spiritual ends we desire.

Surely, therefore, we may look upon prayer for spiritual blessings as not only useful, but as something wholly reasonable and right and in the line of our spirit's normal activities and needs. To forbid such prayer is to put the soul in chains. It is to forbid it to be free. It is to rob it of its birthright. It is to prevent its obeying the law of its being. It

is like forbidding the bird to sing, or the flower to reach toward the light, or the babe to pillow its head upon its mother's breast.

We come now to the problem where the real difficulty lies. May we pray for physical good? Is such asking reasonable?

To these questions, I answer: If we pray for physical things with any idea that our prayer can take the place of physical labor, we shall certainly find that we are making a mistake. The prayer for a harvest, that God answers, is the prayer of the hand which sows the grain and cares for it, and reaps it when it is ripe. The prayer of the sailor for safety, that God answers, is the prayer of the clear head and the skillful hand in managing his ship. Any prayer of words, or even of good desires and longings that is substituted in the place of these prayers of the clear head and the skillful, patient hand, will prove disastrous.

However, this is not saying that prayer of the heart may not go with the prayers of the head and hand; for, as a fact, earnest heart-prayer often has great power to make the brain more alert and the hand more strong and steady.

If I pray for physical good, expecting that God will miraculously change wise and beneficent laws for the sake of answering my prayer; or, if I pray for such good, and lazily rely upon my prayer instead of upon the labor I ought to perform, then I break God's law by my conduct, and my prayer is an evil. But if laboring faithfully with my hand, I accompany my toil with a sincere prayer of the heart, and always

in submission to the Will and the Wisdom that is higher than my own, then I see not why I am doing a wrong, or even an irrational thing, by my praying. Certain it is that if I pray sincerely it will be likely to deepen my earnestness and my patience in my work. Certain it is also that in all my work I am not alone. I am a partner with God; He must make the wind blow that is to fill my sails, I cannot do it; He must make the seed grow that I plant, I cannot impart to it life. It does not seem an unfitting thing, therefore, that by my prayer I should reverently recognize this divine partnership upon which I am so wholly dependent.

Some one inquires: May the sick pray for health? I answer, Why not? Certain it is that the mind has great power over the body. Prayer is a mighty invigorator of the human spirit; why may it not also, through the spirit, invigorate the physical organism which is the servant of the spirit? It seems to be very significant that Jesus was a healer of men's bodies as well as their souls. Science is teaching us that physical health is more dependent upon mental health than the world has known.

And yet, man's physical nature has its laws and its sanctities which must not be violated. The true prayer for health must include the doing of those things which in God's wise order promote health. If we trample on the laws of health, if we abuse our bodies, neglect sanitation, eat impure food, drink impure water, deprive ourselves of pure air, and fail to make use of medical and surgical knowledge and skill in times of need, and then think to evade the

consequences of our ignorance and folly by prayer, we only mock God. What God by the very constitution of our nature invites us to do is, while obeying sacredly all His holy laws written in our bodies, to remember that we are more than bodies, that we are living souls inhabiting bodies, and having at our command mighty spiritual forces which we may summon for the invigoration of our bodies. The spiritual forces have their source in God. By prayer, by personal contact of the human spirit with the Divine Spirit, we may lay hold of these forces and make them effective.

Some one asks: May we pray for such things as our own safety or the safety of others in times of danger? I reply: It seems to me that this depends upon two things,—first, upon whether we ourselves are doing all we can to avert the danger, and, second, upon the spirit in which we pray. Prayer at such a time seems both reasonable and right, as well as useful, if only we pray as did Jesus at a similar crisis, in the filial spirit recognizing the larger wisdom than our own, and subordinating our wish to that.

Said Jesus in his time of extremity: "If it be possible, let this cup pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done." That was true prayer. Such prayer we cannot but believe God welcomes. And certainly such prayer mightily steadies and girds the one who offers it. Having prayed in that spirit, even if the blow he dreads falls upon him, he will be the better prepared to meet it; for no resource that man has ever found in sorrow,

or disaster, or bereavement, is equal to that which he finds in God.

Perhaps my whole thought about prayer can be best summed up by a simple picture. Suppose that here is a child born into the home of a loving and excellent father and mother. The child grows up through infancy, childhood, youth, to manhood, dependent all the while upon its parents, supported by its parents, loved by its parents, educated at the expense of its parents, everything possible done by its parents to make its life happy and noble. Will it not be a fitting thing for that child to recognize its parents, to be grateful to its parents, to appreciate their love and care, to desire to know them and to live on terms of dutiful obedience and affectionate intimacy with them?

Now change the picture just a little —only a little —and we have an essentially correct representation, as I think, of the situation of every human being upon the earth, as regards our relation to God. We are all, as I believe, the children of an Infinite Love and Care. We are not here because of our planning. We did not create the world in which we live; we cannot sustain it for a moment of time. We did not create ourselves. We cannot furnish ourselves with a morsel of food or a breath of air except as we get it from a Source beyond and above ourselves. Our little intelligences are, as it were, candles lighted from the Great Intelligence that shines through all the ordered wisdom of the worlds. Our hearts' affections must have come from an Infinite Love-Fountain. And so as we look about us and within we find the

situation to be essentially that which I have pictured: We are all children; we have been born into a world which our Father has provided for us beforehand. This is our home. In this home we pass our earthly days.

Does it not seem fitting, then, that we should recognize the Source from which we and the home have come? Is it not fitting that we should desire to know and return the Father-love, that has given us all? Is it not right that in our weakness we should seek help from Him who is Infinite Strength?

I take it that something like this is what all true prayer means. If this is its meaning, certainly I for one cannot conceive anything more reasonable, or more beautiful, or more deeply due from man to his Creator and the Author of all good; or more deeply useful to himself, than prayer.

Our life-forces, both of body and spirit, tend ever to run low. God is the Life-Fountain, from whose infinite fulness we are constantly invited to draw renewal of life. How? Through faith and prayer.

We are none of us so wise but that we need a Divine Hand to lead us on our way. Prayer gives us the grasp of such a hand.

We are none of us living lives so worthy but that we need to hear every day a Divine Voice calling us to come up higher. Prayer opens the soul's ears to such a voice.

> "A tender child of summers three,
> Seeking her little bed at night,
> Paused on the dark stair timidly,
> 'O mother! take my hand,' said she,
> 'And then the dark will all be light.'

We older children, grope our way
  From dark behind to dark before;
And only when our hands we lay
  Dear Lord, in Thine, the night is day,
And there is darkness nevermore."

If any of us have foolish prejudices against prayer, caused by misunderstandings of what prayer really is, let us put prejudice aside. Let us look deeper. Let us learn the meaning of Archbishop Trench's lines:

"Lord, what a change within us one short hour
  Spent in Thy presence can avail to make!
  What heavy burdens from our bosoms take!
What parched ground refresh as with a shower!

We kneel, how weak! We rise, how full of power!
  Why, therefore, should we do ourselves this wrong,
  Or others,—that we are not always strong;
That we are ever overborne with care,
  That we should ever weak or heartless be,
Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
  And joy and strength and courage are with Thee?"

If any of us are indifferent to prayer, let us put away our indifference. Let us learn how sane a thing prayer is, as well as how sweet, how blessed and how life-giving.

And let us learn that it is for us all—the young man in his strength, or his temptation; the old man in his age; the mother in her anxieties; the child in his joy. Let us learn that it is not for the church alone, but for home as well, and for all life. Above all let us learn that it is for the secret hour, when none is present but ourselves and God.

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25 BEACON STREET BOSTON, MASS.

[No. 292]

THE UNITARIANISM OF THOMAS JEFFERSON

BY

SAMUEL M. CROTHERS, D. D.

PUBLISHED FOR FREE DISTRIBUTION
AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION
25 BEACON STREET, BOSTON, MASS.

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(*The General Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, passed the following vote at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man."

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

THE UNITARIANISM OF THOMAS JEFFERSON

When we would trace the history of thought, we must make sure that we are following the mental progress of people who are actually thinking. That is very different from the history of dogma. What are the people at any time thinking about? Who are thinking? It is only the persons who are thinking that have anything to do with the history of thought. You see at once the absurdity of any history of religious thought, in the nineteenth century, that did not take account of Charles Darwin, and was interested chiefly in the opinions of persons who happened to be ordained to some particular ministry.

So the history of practical religion must be followed along the lines of people who are actually at work. What are these people, who are working unselfishly for mankind, believing? How does their religion actually manifest itself? There you are in another field from the narrow field of mere professional or sacerdotal interest.

John Milton said that Protestants in his day were "ignorant of their own religion." That is the trouble with Christians generally. They identify religion with the special interests of the clergy rather than with the lives of the people.

You go back and ask what was the religion of rural New England in the eighteenth century, and

the ecclesiastical historian will show you the sermons of Jonathan Edwards, about sinners in the hands of an angry God. That is the religion, they say, of the time; the religion at least of Northampton. A person who is studying the real history finds out that the people of Northampton did not like the religion of Jonathan Edwards, and so he had to leave them. What does that mean? That Jonathan Edwards was religious, and that the people of Northampton were not religious, and so dismissed Jonathan Edwards? Is that the story? Why not say that there was a conflict in Northampton between two kinds of religion—the religion of Jonathan Edwards and the religion of the people of Northampton, who did not believe in all that their minister was saying? Their real religion did not manifest itself in sermons; it manifested itself rather in abstinence from sermons. Unless we can have a different kind of religion, many of these persons said, we will not have any religion at all!

We think of times when the Christian church had its greatest triumphs. There was a time when the Roman Empire was about to be destroyed, and the only institution which survived that wreck was the Christian church. And you say, "What a triumph for the sacerdotal spirit, when all the statesmen of the old Roman Empire and the philosophers were brought to naught, and the Church survived!" But if you take the trouble to look up the real story, you will find that the statesmen and philosophers were in the church. It was a time when the church commanded the best talent and the best thought in the Empire.

They had a very curious fashion in those days, which was known as "capturing Bishops." When they wanted a Bishop, instead of waiting to have him trained in some school, they went out and looked around for the ablest, the most just, the most effective man, and then they seized him and against his will made him Bishop. These captured laymen made very excellent rulers of the church.

One of the ablest and most powerful of the Fathers of the Latin church we call St. Ambrose. Ambrose was the ablest lawyer in northern Italy. He had risen to the post of Governor, a man known far and wide for his simple integrity. Then there came a time when they wanted a Bishop. In those days the people chose the Bishop in a popular assembly. They gathered in a cathedral. There was a riot. Then men called for the Governor to come to quell the riot. Ambrose was a layman, who had not even been baptized. He came to quell the riot. And then suddenly someone started the cry, "Let Ambrose be Bishop!" The whole convention began to shout for Ambrose. Ambrose said he had not been baptized. They laughed, said they would not believe it; they would take the chances. And so when he tried to escape, the mob followed him. He was carried back against his will and was made Bishop. When he wrote to his diocese, he said that he knew nothing about formal theology, and only knew certain principles of justice and right, and had a mind to apply these.

When the Emperor came to Milan, after the hideous massacre of the people in Thessalonica, there stood at the door of the church this man Ambrose.

He was not simply a priest—he was the embodiment of the conscience of the Empire. Ambrose the Bishop stood before the Emperor and said, "You cannot enter here. You have no right here. Emperor you may be, but you are murderer also. Depart!" You can picture the Emperor as he looked at the Bishop, then turned, walked silently toward his palace. People, awestruck, said, "Ambrose is indeed a true Bishop."

That was a triumph of religion. It exhibited power strong enough to stand against all earthly tyranny. If you will read the history of the Christian church, you will find its great moments were not moments of sacerdotal pretensions, but they were moments when the simple conscience of right-minded men found embodiment in religion.

Now I want to speak of one who represents the peculiar type of religion for which the Unitarian church stands; one who was a pronounced Unitarian at a time when that meant the disfavor of those whose votes he sought—Thomas Jefferson.

While the name of Washington is received everywhere with praise, the name of Jefferson has different associations. Even so late as the time of Emerson the respectable classes had a fear of Jefferson. Emerson writes of "great transgressors like Thomas Jefferson." What was the great transgression of Thomas Jefferson, that made half of the people of the country fear him, look upon him as a dangerous character? It was the religion of Thomas Jefferson which was feared.

Take the pamphlets that were issued in the election of 1800, and you will find how great a part the

religion of Jefferson played. There is in the Harvard Library an interesting pamphlet that is entitled "The case of Christianity vs. Thomas Jefferson." The writer—and he speaks for large numbers of people—said that he made no objection to the politics of Jefferson. He did not believe what his enemies were saying about him in regard to his private life, which he admitted to be blameless. But the whole question of religion on this continent depended on this: whether a man holding the religious ideas of Thomas Jefferson should be made President of the United States.

In the year 1800, all over this country, in Massachusetts, in Virginia, in Kentucky, in Ohio, in Tennessee, there were groups of eager young men who were discussing the religion of Thomas Jefferson. It was a political issue. He had been indeed the author of the Declaration of Independence. Still, he was a dangerous character on account of his religion.

I will therefore read the words in which Thomas Jefferson defines his religion. Both Jefferson and his rival, John Adams, were Unitarians, but Jefferson's Unitarianism was militant and aggressive. Jefferson believed that religion must be liberalized and then liberally applied to all practical concerns. He was very frank in saying that the real religion of the American people was not represented in the creeds brought from other lands. And I think the people of that time were perfectly right in thinking of Thomas Jefferson as a preacher of an American religion, of certain ideas which were not only destroying feudalism and monarchism, but were des-

tined also to destroy the power of all mere priesthoods and of the creeds that had been inherited.

Writing to Dr. Benjamin Rush, Jefferson gives this as his attitude toward religion:

"I promised you that I would one day give you my views of the Christian Religion. They are the result of a life of inquiry and reflection, and are very different from the Anti-Christian system attributed to me by those who know nothing of my opinions. To the corruptions of Christianity I am indeed opposed, but not to the genuine precepts of Jesus himself. I am a Christian, but I am a Christian in the only sense in which I believe Jesus wished anyone to be, sincerely attached to his doctrine in preference to all others; ascribing to him all **human** excellence, and believing that he never claimed any other. The question of his being a member of the Godhead claimed by some of his followers is foreign to a view which is based on the intrinsic merits of his doctrines."

Then he sums up his own conception of Jesus. "Jesus corrected the deism of the Jews, confirming their belief in one God, giving a juster notion of his attributes. He went beyond all other teachers in inculcating a universal philanthropy, not only to kindred and friends, but to all mankind, uniting all in one family in the bonds of love, peace, common wants and common aids. He went beyond the Hebrew code, which dealt with actions only. He pushed his scrutiny into the heart of man, erected his tribunal in the region of his thoughts, and purified the waters at their fountain head. Jesus taught the doctrine of a future state, while he made it supple-

mentary to other motives of moral conduct. We have his doctrines only in a fragmentary condition. They have been disfigured by those who have engrafted on the simple doctrines the mysticisms of Greek sophistry."

He recognized in the four gospels only fragments of the teachings of Jesus, but he declares "a system of religion fitted out in the style and spirit of these rich fragments would be the most sublime ever taught by man. In the midst of his active political career, his mind turned continually to the thought that if people could only have before them the recorded words of Jesus rather than what other men said about him they would see not only the simplicity but the power of his religion. He corresponded with the great Unitarian preacher and man of Science, Joseph Priestley, on the possibility of arranging the words of Jesus in such a way as to make the nature of his religion plain to the simplest understanding. He wished Priestley to do this, but after Priestley's death he did it himself. The result was what has been known as "Jefferson's Bible". In a letter written in 1816, he describes it: "I have made a wee little book which I call the Philosophy of Jesus; it is a paradigma of his doctrines; made by cutting the leaves out of the book and arranging them on the pages of a blank book in a certain order of time and subject. A more beautiful or precious morsel of ethics I have never seen; it is a document in proof that I am a real Christian, that is to say a disciple of the doctrines of Jesus."

The Fifty-Seventh Congress passed the following concurrent resolution: "That there be printed and

bound, by photolithographic process, with an introduction not to exceed twenty-five pages to be prepared by Dr. Cyrus Adler, Librarian of the Smithsonian Institute, for the use of Congress, 9,000 copies of Thomas Jefferson's Morals of Jesus of Nazareth, as the same appears in the National Museum, 3,000 for the use of the Senate and 6,000 for the use of the House." Anyone who is fortunate enough to possess this beautiful volume will find the answer to the question: Are Unitarians Christians?

Jefferson's insistence on the teachings of Jesus rather than upon any stories of miraculous events was characteristic of his habit of mind. He was an idealist in the most literal sense. He believed in the power of ideas to make their own way. He loved to quote the text from the beginning of the Fourth Gospel: "In the beginning was the word". In summing up the things for which he wished to be remembered he forgot to mention what most people would consider his greatest act, the purchase of Louisiana territory. It was the Declaration of Independence, and his utterances in behalf of civil and religious liberty, in which he gloried. It would be difficult to over-estimate the effect upon the development of the idealism of the United States of Jefferson's insistence on inserting what have been called "glittering generalities" into the Declaration of Independence.

Abraham Lincoln said, "All honor to Thomas Jefferson, who, in the concrete pressure of a struggle for national independence for a single people, had the coolness, the foresight, and the sagacity to introduce into a mere revolutionary document an ab-

stract truth applicable to all men at all times, and so embalm it there that today, and in all coming days, it shall be a stumbling block to all who seek to bring back tyranny and oppression".

It is to the glory of Jefferson that he saw the concrete application of the abstract ideas he proclaimed. When he declared the inalienable rights of man, he applied his doctrine to the black man as well as to the white man. There was a ringing protest against the slave trade and all that went with it which he wished to have incorporated in the great Declaration. If Jefferson's resolution had been carried, it might have changed the course of our history.

In all his political documents, Jefferson's religious convictions were manifest. The Virginia act establishing religious freedom begins: "Whereas Almighty God hath created the mind free", and goes on to assert that the "holy author of our religion" ordains that religion shall be free.

In Jefferson's thought there was a natural religion common to all, and to this he continually appealed. When an orthodox member of the Assembly moved to insert the name of Jesus Christ, as the "author of our religion", Jefferson refused to accept the amendment. The Jew or the Mohammedan had equal rights in the state, and the state acknowledged the right of every man to define his religion for himself.

Thomas Jefferson and John Adams were political antagonists, but they were both Unitarians, and their correspondence on religious subjects was most interesting. They agreed in thinking that

America needed religion and that the orthodox religion of the time was inadequate.

Jefferson writes: "I never submitted my creed to any body of men whatever whether in politics or religion or any theory else, when I was capable of thinking for myself. That would be the last degradation of a free mind. If I could not go to heaven without doing that, I would not go at all. And I never had an opinion in politics or religion that I was afraid to own. A reserve on these subjects would have procured me more esteem from some people—but less from myself."

These two old men who had departed from the conventional religion of their time,—what did they think of life? What did it mean to them? John Adams writes to Jefferson, asking the question, and Jefferson replied:

"You ask me if I would agree to live my seventy-three years over again, to which I say Yea. I think with you that this is a good world—on the whole. There are indeed gloomy minds inhabiting diseased bodies who are disgusted with the present and despairing of the future, always counting that the worst will happen because it may happen. I steer my bark with Hope at the head, leaving Fear astern. My hopes indeed sometimes fail, but not oftener than their gloomy forebodings."

It is not with the spirit of sectarian pride that one thinks of the prophecy of Thomas Jefferson, in a letter written in 1822, where in the enthusiasm of his own personal faith he says, "I trust that there is not a young man now living who will not die a

Unitarian." It shows that a man may be a great statesman and not a good prophet!

But that does bring the question, Why was not this prophecy fulfilled? In a certain sense Jefferson's forecast has been justified. There has been a general trend toward a more liberal faith, but it has not been realized in the way which Thomas Jefferson expected. The church has not yet become the natural, the free expression of truth-loving men who are seeking to carry on in perfect freedom the work their fathers began. The church is still too narrow in its sympathy, too ineffective in its method. Who is to blame for it? Well, if that is true, it is men who believe very much as Thomas Jefferson believed who are to blame for it. They are to blame for not asserting themselves and asserting their own religion and then taking up the responsibility for its furtherance.

There are a great many things that belong to religion which are not done through any church at all. Religion is manifested in business, in science, in education, in politics. But there are certain things that cannot be organized or carried on in that way. Jefferson knew it. Every man knows it. Religion as an intimate, personal affair carried on from one generation to another through the family, through the home, through the little community, widening ever as it goes, applying the great principles not merely to nations, but to individuals,—this has to be done, and somebody has to do it.

The men of Jefferson's generation did not take that task quite seriously enough. Having proclaimed the principle, they then escaped from the re-

sponsibility. Let me read a little letter which Thomas Jefferson wrote to a namesake sometime before his own death. He asked that that letter should not be opened until the boy was able to understand it. In it with pathetic earnestness he sought to transmit in some way his own spiritual life to the next generation, to tell the small boy what religion meant to him as he was about to die. And thus Jefferson writes:

"This letter will be to you as one from the dead. The writer will be in his grave before you can weigh its counsel. Adore God. Reverence and cherish your parents. Love your neighbor as yourself, and your country more than yourself. Be just. Be true. Murmur not at the ways of Providence. So shall the life into which you have entered be the portal to one of eternal and ineffable bliss. And if to the dead it be permitted to care for the things of this world, every action of your life shall be under my regard."

Now that is something that has to be carried down. Beside the government of nations, beside the declarations of independence, there is a simple, natural life of religion that has to be nourished and sustained, and somebody has to look after it. Who is going to look after it? It is something that cannot be delegated. It belongs to every parent, it belongs to every teacher,—not merely the adding some new domain to human thought, but keeping alive the beautiful pieties of the human heart. It has to be done over and over again, and we are responsible for it.

One of the saddest things is to see one whose life was shining with idealism, full of religion, full of

faith, full of freedom, growing old, passing away and leaving absolutely no successors. We cannot allow that to happen. That is the reason why churches are necessary. They are the extension of the family. They serve to make the connection between one generation and that which follows it. That is the reason why churches which are priest-ridden, and which have creeds that are obsolete, survive. They answer to a human need.

The religion of men like Thomas Jefferson finds magnificent expression in the free state. But to perpetuate such a religion and to interpret it anew to childhood and youth, we need a free church. And this church must be patiently built up anew in each generation.

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THE GOSPEL OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

BY

HOWARD N. BROWN, D. D.

PUBLISHED FOR FREE DISTRIBUTION
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THE GOSPEL OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY.

In all our schools of science, modifications both of theory and practice are gradually being introduced, so that by degrees the whole body of teaching is somewhat changed. Among teachers of religion also a new body of religious ideas is always slowly being formed. Even though the profession may be that of holding an unchangeable truth, a new emphasis and new combinations inevitably produce alterations. If in some measure we can gather up and state the results of modern thinking which have given old beliefs a new form, or a new dress, that should represent approximately the Gospel as it stands in the modern Christian mind. It is a somewhat ambitious undertaking; for the field of survey is wide and we can think only of dealing with a small section of it. We must not attempt more than to take up a few of the main points of the message which the Christianity of the present day is trying to shape and deliver, and these we must select with a view to having them as central and dominant as may be. The most vital Christian thinking concerns itself with three supreme realities. The key to its message must lie in what it has to express and advocate with regard to God, and Man, and Christ. Let us try to find a little of the best that the modern mind has to say on these greatest themes.

The outstanding feature of Christian theism at the present time, one may say, is its disposition to think of humanity rather exclusively in the terms of human-

ity. The "divinity of man" is a topic on which preachers and writers here and there like to discourse; but a still more common habit of thought is indicated by the expression which speaks of the "humanness of God." This tendency to think of the divine being as imaged or symbolized by what we know of human nature, no doubt arises as a strong reaction from the kind of thinking that widely prevailed during the period immediately before our own; for that made the outward world by far its greatest oracle of Deity. Almost the only God recognized for a time, where scientific interests predominated, was the so-called God of Nature. If one wanted to acquire reasonable views of the Maker and Ruler of the universe he was bidden to look to the physical structure of the world about him. There were the chief works of the divine mind, and from them one must draw what conclusions he could, concerning the character of the being responsible for their creation.

But of late years this assumption that the external world is God's greatest work has been sharply challenged. After all, is not the soul of man the supreme triumph of creative might and skill! What higher attribute has the solar system to boast than that of mere quantity or size? Wonder for wonder, is not man himself the crowning miracle of existence? If therefore Deity anywhere stands revealed in his works is it not humanity above all which should declare to us what he is! Moreover, for the purposes of such interpretation we have the advantage of some interior knowledge of ourselves, while we know nature only from the outside. The God of nature is much farther removed from us than is the God of the human heart. Divine

immanence thus becomes the characteristic doctrine of the day. The indwelling God is chiefly the object of modern belief and worship.

We have reason to say that this change in religious thinking promises immense gain, and evades many stumbling blocks that have caused trouble in the past; though it has its own difficulties to encounter that need to be guarded against with some care. When men turn entirely away from the God of nature to worship the God enthroned in the soul, and the thought of divine transcendence is altogether merged and lost in the thought of divine immanence, it is rather more necessary to answer the question why our human world does not go better, with this divine presence seated at the heart of it. And the readiest answer to that question which a certain portion of the modern mind has found is to suppose that God cannot be, as was once supposed, omnipotent. He must be limited in power, and like ourselves he is perhaps gradually learning how to accomplish more perfectly his creative tasks.

But where theism is led off along that track it soon finds itself quite without a road. One would like to post over the entrance to that turning, very conspicuously, the sign "No thoroughfare"! A Deity who is only a trifle wiser and stronger than men, and who by reason of the inadequacy of his resources is likely to fail them in a great emergency, is of no earthly use; or he is so little to be depended upon that religion has practically nothing to offer on that basis. Dogmas of infinity and omnipotence are of course incomprehensible. They have no meaning save that of ample sufficiency of wisdom, goodness and power. That meaning however is vital to Christian belief. The infinite is

that which we cannot see across, and which has no other shore that we can find. The thought of infinity is merely terrific and tormenting if we try to take hold of in any other way than this, and we have to acknowledge that no one can realize the infinity of any of the divine attributes. But on the other hand the notion of a limited deity is one of the most suicidal that theism could adopt. One would think it might occur to amateur theologians who write novels that, if it is worth while to have a deity, it is better to have one who can do something more than stand around and say how sorry he is that for the present the situation seems to be beyond control.

It is just at this point that theism may derive great help from its appeal to the God of nature. For, if our human world goes lamely and seems to be much out of joint, we have but to lift our eyes to the stellar spaces above us to find a perfection of movement and adjustment that appears to be absolutely without flaw. The God who established the laws of gravitation and light has not bungled his job. The adequacy of skill there displayed leaves nothing to be desired, and it is rather foolish to say that the wisdom which set the stars and planets in their places must have broken down when it came to the making of men. Meanwhile, we have only to accept the testimony of consciousness, which affirms our moral freedom, to explain well enough how it comes to pass that our human world functions so imperfectly.

The God of all power and might leaves us in large measure to work out our own salvation, because that is the only way in which we can climb up to the level where he dwells. We need not doubt the sufficiency of

his wisdom and power, when he thinks it proper to exert them on our behalf, and we cannot say exactly where the limits of our freedom and responsibility shall be drawn. For aught we know it is better that we should be left to learn through our mistakes till we have touched the very last notch of safety; though doubtless, however God may hold off his hand from interference with our ways, he will not suffer us to wreck entirely his creative purpose.

But while modern thought has run, here and there, into dangerous shallows, on the whole it has brought its favorite doctrine of divine immanence to some highly satisfactory results. This movement of reaction against the nature-worship of other days might be called a return to older and better traditions, but it is really something more than that. It has made a decided gain on what went before. The Deity of one substance with the spiritual nature of man, the human God, is now something other than any conception accepted in the past. Probably there is little, if anything, new under the sun, if we look deeply enough into exceptional individual minds. But from an ethical point of view at least the idea of God now seems to be taking a form distinctly better than any which has been common in Christian history. There is a new emphasis on certain aspects of the divine mind and character which promises a great advance of Christian faith.

For one thing, whether it be the growth of a more democratic spirit or the increase of a more enlightened moral sentiment that is to be held responsible for it, there is far less talk of the regal or kingly side of the mind of God, and of what the demands of justice may be supposed to require him to do. Perhaps the two

most dominant ideas in the latter day thought of God are those of benignity and service. He is not very much to us, what a certain labor leader once called him in crude but forcible speech, "an infinite boss". He is rather the Father and Friend and Servant of all. We do not think of him as being bound by the mere red tape of his own laws. He must be free at all times to punish or to forgive as may seem best in his sight. He does not sit upon the throne of his universe to receive the incense of praise; but everywhere he gives himself without stint or limit to create, and help, and save. No corner of his domain is so humble but he is there, as if there were no other place; and every thrill, whether of joy or sorrow, must be his pleasure or suffering as well.

This is not to shut out of sight the sterner side of a divine government of the world, but to balance the system and machine of governmental control with those human qualities that the idea of management suggests. God will be infinitely patient with our slow progress in the stupendous lessons he has given us to learn; yet he has sharp chastisements for those who will not learn. No mother's hand was ever more comforting or more caressing than his touch upon the repentant heart; no torturer's arm could be more unyielding where punishment is needed to enforce a lesson that would not otherwise be learned.

One cannot think that there is any doubt about the superior moralization of the modern thought of God, or any measure by which to compute the uplift that this should bring to the whole human mind. The irrationality of many Christian beliefs is not perhaps, in itself, a very serious matter. The world is so little

run by logic that a considerable amount of unreason can be borne without much difficulty or danger. But the bad and hideous thing is the shocking misrepresentation of the moral character of God which some of these beliefs have made. That is something not to be borne if any help can be found. Because, while it is true in some measure that man always makes his God in his own image, it is equally true that man is always making or remaking himself in the likeness of whatever he worships. The bad man never stands much chance of reformation so long as he bows down to a bad Deity.

Christianity of course has brought immense help to the world with its belief in a gentle and humane Man-god. But the good which this belief ought to have wrought has been much hindered and spoiled by the barbaric notions about the Father Almighty that have lingered on in the Christian mind. The God behind Christ, in whom for example certain revivalists appear to believe, if seen in human form would be a disgrace to any civilized community. It is impossible for the world to make much ethical progress till that dark shadow can be lifted from the religious consciousness. The newer thought of God which enthrones on high the best love and sacrifice and moral discernment we know, and makes not so much an eternal justice as an eternal goodness the supreme power of existence, is we may be sure one of great and permanent achievements of our time.

In the doctrine of man which is being shaped among the Christian preachers and thinkers of our day there is again a distinct appearance of return to older types of belief, notably to what was in the mind of St. Paul; though, once more, it is a movement of return quite

other than that of the Prodigal Son. This home-coming is one that brings with it its own gathered sheaves. It is quite possible, by the way, that we may all be knocking some day at the doors of the Mother-church of Christendom. But whether or not we go in will depend, one may suppose, on the way we are met at the threshold. If His Holiness should come forth expecting to find us clothed in rags and ready to say, "Father we have sinned," very likely we shall not care to partake of his fatted calf. At present we are rather under the impression that we have something to offer the head of the house not unworthy his acceptance. In this instance we are returning, though with a difference, to something like Paul's conception of the dual nature of man. We are coming to make something like his sharp distinction between the natural or animal man, and the ethical or spiritual man.

Man taken merely as an animal, we begin to perceive, deserves the meanest things that ever have been or ever can be said of him. In so far as he is ruled by his physical appetites and passions he mixes with them a fiendishness of disposition that makes him the worst and lowest thing by which the earth is infested. The four-footed beast is merely non-moral. But apparently the human being cannot be that; at least he cannot long stay in that position. He must rise above or sink below that level. Failing to realize the ethical purposes of his being he falls to depths of infamy that no other nature can reach.

It is a compliment to call men of this sort "swine"; there never was a pig so disgustingly dirty or so shamefully mean. Men in whom the animal part of them is dominant become devils, and nothing short of that. The

admixture of a higher intelligence with these lower traits makes them the worst kind of being conceivable. Never a word has been spoken in hatred or fear of their sin that goes beyond the mark. We speak of the "morals of the barnyard" that intrude themselves into the human province; but the morals of the barnyard are altogether lovely and of good report as compared with the perversions of which human nature is capable. To be sure man is, in part, to be rated as an animal, and his animal nature has its functions to perform. But we can only live with him on condition that this part of him is held in subordinate place, or is kept discreetly hidden from public view.

On the other hand, the spiritual man is great and wonderful and admirable beyond all telling. He is no mere refinement of the physical structure in which he dwells but he is, as Paul calls him, "a new creature." He lives by a different method and obeys a different law. Perhaps no more adequate expression of his true greatness was ever made than that which also comes from the pen of the same Apostle: "The first man is of the earth, earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven." Or we may take Shakespeare's phrase, written surely of this higher kind of man, "In action how like an angel, in apprehension how like a God!" For this spiritual being, striving upward through lower orders of existence till in humanity it comes to self-consciousness and command, must be an emanation from Deity. Man in spirit is a Son of God.

One of the clear marks of this divinity within him should be that he is an original source of power; he, too, can create. This is what our moral freedom means. In the act of choosing what road to take the human

will does a sovereign thing. What it creates may be infinitely small, but it is none the less real. It gives us the only hint we have of what the source of an infinite and eternal energy might be. In his small degree man can create, as God creates. He builds things that are the image of his own ideals. These ideals are not given in any past out of which he has sprung; they are not put upon him by any environment that surrounds him, or any sovereignty that is over him. They may be poor things, but they are his own; and some of them we must say, notwithstanding his little knowledge, are quite majestic. Among all the poor stuff that conceptual philosophy produces when it loses touch with the testimony of consciousness and the facts of real life, the metaphysics of determinism are of the worst. Like Ingersoll's theologian, they "assume what nobody knows anything about, and then say 'hence we infer.'" Happily we are now much delivered from thralldom to their baseless assertions, and their mere clock-work universe appears to be going quite out of date.

This spiritual man we begin to perceive is always a great builder, and what he builds is his own invention. Here also is a point of sharp contrast between him and the animal man. The latter rather likes to destroy. With him, wanton and needless demolition is a kind of pastime. The higher nature is rather dominated by a supreme passion for construction and even in its rebuilding finds it somewhat irksome to tear down what has to be cleared away. We may add that by the inmost law of his being the spiritual man is a social being. The animal man is social only so far as a common peril induces him to foregather with others of his kind.

But this other cannot live or grow in solitude. It is doubtful whether even the companionship of God can suffice him, being deprived of the society of his kind. Everything that he is distinctively is developed in him through human relationships. For him selfishness, indifference to others, is suicide. There is no heaven that he can find alone, and on earth he prospers only through a well-being of which all more or less partake. Here, then, is the one foundation on which social aspirations can hope to reach their end. Economic socialism is foolishness and a delusive snare unless it is based on the reality of the spiritual man. The cooperative commonwealth is a mere dream taken otherwise than as the blossoming and fruition of the spiritual nature.

Now the presence of these two kinds of humanity on the earth, and in every human breast, makes our human world always and everywhere a battle ground between them. By whatever methods they contend against each other, and whatever tactics they employ in their fight, the great question of existence continually is, "which is going to prevail." The doctrine of evolution tends to confirm this view of the case; for thus every successive type of higher life has been obliged to prove its fitness to live, through conflict. It is a great and unsolved question how far the spiritual man can take into his hands the weapons of the animal man without sinking himself to the lower level. Perhaps there is no theoretical answer to that question. To some extent the spirit may consecrate the weapons of the flesh to its use; though it cannot employ them without taking a certain risk of forfeiting its own position.

Anyhow the spiritual man has a constant fight on

hand to maintain his own place. There is no discharge and no truce in that war. No doubt it is better that he should not hate his adversary. But better, one may guess, that his vision should be partly clouded by that dark passion than that he should be blind to the tragic nature of the conflict he has to wage. Either it is his destruction, or he must put the animal man under his feet. We have our hope in God to help us; but the wreck-strewn past gives us small right to expect that he will deliver us, unless we do the utmost that is in us to deliver ourselves.

The one point in this connection on which we may feel somewhat uncertain of the drift of modern opinion is that which concerns the ultimate destiny of human life. It is a little difficult to make out whether belief in immortality is strengthening or weakening at the present time. Surely it should be plain to most people, however, that without the affirmation of continued existence hereafter any Gospel will be left practically ineffective; and one may predict that the Christian consciousness will ultimately find new assurance on that subject. Certainly interest in the question has been much deepened and quickened of late, and one may hope that new study of the grounds for belief in a future life will yield new confidence in its reality. With this proviso we may hold that a very reasonable and a very noble doctrine of man is being shaped in the Christian mind.

With regard to the person and mission of Christ, the great triumph of the Christianity of our day is the recovery of the historic Jesus of Nazareth. There is still much divergence of opinion in appraising the worth of that recovery, though all will agree that it must have

an important bearing on the future of Christian thought. Into the merits of the discussion between those who think that this historic Christ does not amount to so very much, when compared with the ideal conceptions that have ruled the mind of the church, and those who think on the other hand that the great opportunity of Christianity now is to get itself established, once more, on a firm historic basis, we will not here try to enter. Leaving these controverted matters entirely one side, may we not say that we have the key to the further development of Christian belief in the undisputed fact that we have, in the historic Christ, a most remarkable portrait of something like the complete spiritual man in action, as a living and breathing reality! Here, in a picture of real life, we may see what the spiritual man is and does; how he comports himself, and how his triumphs are won on the stage of actual affairs.

The church insists upon the absolute perfection of his being and his entire sinlessness. There seems to be little occasion to quarrel with or to uphold an assertion of that kind. In the nature of the case we have no means of knowing with regard to anything upon which we look whether or not it is absolutely perfect. Infinity can mean to us only sufficiency of perfection, and sinlessness can signify little more than what Pilate said: "I find no fault in him." In this latter statement the world is so nearly agreed that there is practically no controversy about it. Sometimes a criticism is heard, such as that his denunciation of the Pharisees was too severe, or that his purging of the Temple was an act of undue violence. But few pay much attention to such critics and objectors; and

it is seldom that a bitter antagonist of Christianity manifests any hostility toward the Founder of Christianity.

The world at large unquestionably sees in him a truthful representation of the spiritual nature of man quite the equal, and in the general opinion far more than the equal, of anything else contained in the annals and literature of our race. Whether or not the imagination is capable of making a better picture, it never has produced that result; and this image of the higher life, beside its moral beauty, has the advantage of being a picture of reality.

Just what then is that worth to the world? The answer to this question must depend largely on what we think of the worth of personality. We may surmise that the modern mind is by way of finding out, if it has not fully reached the discovery, that personality is on the whole the biggest fact with which it is called to deal. The hunt for a man to fit the place, always going on throughout society from bottom to top; the disastrous consequences that result from a misfit of this kind, and the triumphant success that follows when the right man is found, certainly inculcates some such lesson. The remarkable mental contortions to which people will subject themselves in trying to prop up or keep hold of a leader in whom they have once put their trust; or to break and wriggle out of connection with a personality which they have come to dislike, testify of the general feeling that, whether for good or ill, the man in question is an enormus factor of the situation.

It is often difficult to make out what the reasons for personal attraction and repulsion are, but of the great

part which such things play in deciding the course of events there can be no doubt. We may talk of the rightful supremacy of measures over men all we please; the fact remains that take the world as it stands men are the rallying points about which ordinary minds chiefly group themselves, and personal leadership is about the most decisive factor of the world's life. No satisfactory explanation of the victory of Christianity over other forms of faith in the Roman Empire can be given, save that its ideas centered (as the ideas of other cults did not) in the figure of a very great and wonderful man.

What gave Christianity its superiority then may be safely trusted as its main support to-day. At all events an instinctive assertion of some such truth is now so bred into the consciousness of Christendom that nobody is likely to have much influence over currents of Christian thought who makes light of the leadership of Christ. One may talk to non-Christians with much success, of course, though he quite ignores the personality which so much dominates the Christian mind. But this latter will not much listen to him. It is irrevocably fixed in its loyalty to Christ, and to its faith that the divinest reality anywhere provided for men to follow and obey is given through him.

The Fourth Gospel puts into the mouth of Christ a saying that as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness so must the Son of Man be lifted up; and that, being so elevated, he will draw all men unto him. This may sound like magic, but we have to acknowledge that it is magic which works beneficently, and on an enormous scale. The leadership of

Christ is not any mere high sounding phrase. Despite the alleged failures of Christianity he is immensely and incalculably potent at the present day. These failures have resulted, as anybody can see, not so much because he has led people astray as because his professed followers have insulated themselves against his personal influence by doctrines and philosophies that never had any place in his mind.

Anyhow, the Christian world is not going to give him up; and it is going to know him better in days to come than he has been known in previous periods of Christian history. In this fact alone there is an almost boundless hope. We need have no fears for a world in which the spirit that breathes through his precepts shall come to bear rule over a majority of minds.

The conclusions here stated may be briefly summarized. The greater moralization of the later thought of Deity; the clearer understanding of the essentially divine character of spiritual humanity, and of the line of cleavage that runs between that and the animal man; the increasing effectiveness of the leadership of Christ as our representative spiritual man through the ages;—these are here set forth as the distinctive marks of the Gospel of the Twentieth Century.

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[No. 294]

UNITARIANISM

What It Is Not, and What It Is

BY

JOHN H. APPLEBEE

PUBLISHED FOR FREE DISTRIBUTION

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION

25 BEACON STREET, BOSTON

The American Unitarian Association was Founded in 1825 with the Following Expressed Purpose

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*The General Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, passed the following vote at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man."

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

UNITARIANISM

What It Is Not, and What It Is

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God . . . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these."—*Mark XII, 30, 31.*

"These churches accept the religion of Jesus, holding in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man."—*Preamble to the Constitution of the General Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches.*

These two supreme commands of Jesus express the heart of Unitarianism. Unitarianism is the attitude of the individual soul towards God. It is not a belief nor a dogma, nor a ritual. It is the soul turned to God in love. This means love for all that is divine in the universe and its life. It also means devotion to the noblest and best in the soul's inmost self. For that is God *in* the soul.

But even this is not enough. The soul cannot be right towards God unless it be right towards fellow men. "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen." It may be that the love of our brother is the only open way to love of God. Through human experiences we reach divine realities. We go from the seen to the unseen, from the known to the unknown. Thus Unitarianism, because it would be love to God, must be also love to man. And this not as a mere sentiment, but as a practical principle, to be applied to daily life.

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength; (that is to say with your entire self) and thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This, then, is Unitarianism in a nutshell.

In it, indeed, is summed up the very essence of religion by whatever name it is called. It is very simple; also it is very profound. It reaches to the depths of life and life's experience. It is the solvent of all perplexing social problems. When men live as well as profess the commandment of love there will be no social problems. It is the bringer of the world's brotherhood. It is the assurance of the soul's peace.

Oneness with God and fellow men is the heart of religion. Oneness with God is the divine life. Oneness with fellow man is the human life. Both together are,—life.

This, then, is Unitarianism. It may be much else; but it is certainly this. And here we might perhaps leave the matter. But it is necessary to go a little more into detail. This is too general, too vague perhaps, essential though it is. Let us inquire still further then what Unitarianism may be and may not be.

To begin with, I do not like the word Unitarian. It has seemingly a too limited meaning. It is too coldly mathematical; and I never could bring myself to like mathematics. I would gladly change the name if I could; but I cannot. It is too late to do that. It has come down from our forefathers; and we must make the best of it. The word Unitarianism

expresses a vital fact in our religious history. It has a meaning far deeper than the theological conception of the unity of God, the universe, and life, deep as these thoughts are; and essential as they are to clear thinking. Like most names, it means far more than it indicates. It has a splendid connotation of heroic struggle for religious liberty; of devotion to the truth for truth's sake; of fine lives interpreting the religion of the spirit. To some of us it signifies the supreme thing in life.

And, after all, names are of but little moment. It is the spirit that counts. "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet;" and Jesus by any other name would be the son of God and the brother of men still. And curiously enough, the names of most of the Christian sects signify what is superficial rather than fundamental to the religious life. Methodist, Episcopalian, Congregational, Baptist, what not? These all signify very superficial matters of mere church government or ordinance. These, alas, are the things that divide us. And we are altogether too prone to insist upon them. But underneath all names are the enduring realities that unite.

We spell the name of the Eternal Reality G-O-D. Another spells it D-I-E-U. Still another G-O-T-T. These are the accidents of our environment and education. But we all worship at the same shrine. We are all children of the same father. Nothing can rob us of that inheritance. And I think the Father listens to the heart, and not the lips; and understands all languages that are spoken in love.

So we will not quarrel with the name Unitarianism,

little as we may like it. We will look beneath the name to the spirit, the soul, the heart. And the spirit of Unitarianism is beautiful; the soul of it is strong; and the heart of it is loving.

We are handicapped in our inquiry at the very outset by the fact that no man, be he ever so wise, can speak for Unitarianism, to say just what it is or what it is not. One of its fundamental tenets is that the soul shall be left free to find its own truth, and to express it in its own way. What God says to *you* is the one important thing for you. Unitarianism has a sublime faith in the integrity of the soul, a faith which the history of the discovery of truth has amply justified. Attempts have been made to formulate a common statement of belief for all Unitarians; but they have always failed. And this for the very simple reason that Unitarianism is so much more than a statement of belief.

So we will recognize at the start that what is to follow is merely my thought of Unitarianism, which may or may not be of much worth. And even so it must be very inadequate; because no words nor thought can express the *life* that is Unitarianism.

Let us first consider some of the things that Unitarianism is *not*. This is, perhaps, necessary because of certain misunderstandings that linger obstinately in the minds of many.

To begin with, Unitarianism is not a mere negation. You have perhaps heard of the "cold negations of Unitarianism." These cold negations are a myth. Nothing could be further from the genius of Unitarianism. It is not a denial; but an affirmation. Always

and everywhere it is an affirmation. It is true that it has felt itself compelled to deny certain theological dogmas and doctrines that do not seem to it to accord with reason or right. All seekers for the truth have been compelled to do this. The mere assertion of any truth is the denial of its corresponding error. When you say the earth revolves around the sun, you deny, at least by implication, that the sun revolves around the earth. Among these doctrines that Unitarianism denies are: The doctrine of the trinity; the deity of Jesus; the fall of man; the total depravity of man; the vicarious atonement, and the like. But in making these denials, Unitarianism affirms the corresponding truths. It affirms the unity of God, the universe and life; it affirms the divinity of Jesus, and all the sons and daughters of men. (Mark that *his* prayer begins with the words "*Our* Father," not "*My* Father." This first person *plural* is significant); it affirms that man has risen, is rising, and shall rise to ever diviner stretches of life; it affirms the essential dignities and nobility of man as the child of God; it affirms that each one of us shall work out his own salvation in terms of character. These are larger affirmations than the doctrines they displace.

Unitarianism, then, is a positive faith. It destroys only that it may rebuild. I must root up the weeds in my garden or the flowers will not grow. Unitarianism seeks to root up the weeds of superstition and error. It cherishes the flowers of faith. A purely destructive faith cannot live. The time for destruction is passed. It is now the time for construction.

We build our lives and faith not on the denial of error; but on the affirmation of truth. The truth, by its own power, will drive out the error. That is the way of truth always. We have passed through the gloom of Carlyle's "Everlasting No" into the light of the "Everlasting Yea." "It is with man's soul as it was with nature: the beginning of creation is—Light. Till the eye have vision, the whole members are in bonds. Divine moment, when over the tempest-tost soul, as once over the wild-weltering Chaos, it is spoken: 'Let there be light.'"

To that divine moment Unitarianism has come, not without struggle. It has left behind the gloom of denial, and entered into the light of faith. Unitarianism is an affirmation of the things that divinely *are*.

Therefore it is not atheism. It seems ridiculous to Unitarians even to say this. For almost a hundred years God has been preached from this pulpit of May Memorial Church by the men who have led its members into the higher life. God, and nothing else, has been preached and lived here; which latter is the more essential. Unitarianism is steeped in faith in God. "God is. God is here. God is now," cried Edward Everett Hale. And his whole life showed that he meant just what he said. The present reality of God, here on earth, now in this twentieth century, is the fundamental faith of Unitarianism. And yet somehow the idea has got abroad that Unitarianism is a Godless faith, whatever that may be. It is related that a rigid orthodox lady once went into a strange church, where a man she did not know was preaching. As she left the church she said, "I wish that atheist

Theodore Parker could have heard that sermon." She had been listening to Theodore Parker himself. The story may or may not be true; but it is typical. Let it be declared once and for all, with what power one man may have, that while Unitarianism may not accede to some particular doctrine about God, *it has faith in God.* The reality of God is the foundation stone upon which its whole structure is reared. Unitarianism is saturated through and through with the spirit of God.

Unitarianism is not a prayerless faith. Indeed there cannot be a prayerless faith. Faith is prayer. It leads the soul directly to God; and that is the meaning of prayer. To the true Unitarian prayer is the normal attitude of the soul. God is our Father; we are his children. What more natural than that the child should commune with the Father? It is as natural as that the plant should turn to the light. The soul and the plant are seeking the source of their being. To the Unitarian prayer is the highest function of life. It is the soul reaching up to God.

Prayer is not mere petition; not the mere asking for things, though it has been reduced to that low estate. We do not ask that rain shall be sent or withheld. We do not ask that the beautiful order of nature shall be set aside for our personal gratification. We are quite content to leave the universe in the care of God, assured that he knows best. It is well that man cannot by his prayers change the order of nature. If he could, hopeless chaos would result. All this is not prayer.

Prayer is oneness of the soul of man with the

spirit of God. It is one form of that very love to God which is the essence of the religious life. It is divine communion, which merges naturally, and of spiritual necessity, into gratitude. It gives strength and courage, patience and peace. This has been the witness of all men of supreme religious genius. They went to the source of all strength, and were strong. Jesus prayed, alone on the hillside, under the stars, with God; and Jesus did great things. True prayer is always answered. Itself is its own answer. Do not ask for things. Do not ask that nature's order shall be set aside for your sake. Ask for God; and you will find him.

Unitarianism, then, is a prayerful faith. Oneness with God is its central purpose. This is another expression of its thought of unity. "I and the Father are one." Reverently and humbly we venture to echo the words in our own inmost thought, remembering also that he said "*Our* Father." Man is at home in God. Faith and prayer are the two mighty forces that redeem the world.

Nor is Unitarianism a Christless faith, though this charge is brought against it. On the contrary, it is shot through and through with the spirit of Jesus. It is a persistent misunderstanding, not to say misrepresentation, that Unitarians do not believe in, nor accept, Jesus. Nothing could be further from the truth. We reject certain dogmas about Jesus, and this emphatically and frankly; but we do not reject Jesus. Robert Collyer was fond of telling how, when he and his good Methodist mother were going home after she had heard him preach his first Unitarian

sermon, she said to him, "I couldna understand half thee said; and I didna believe all that I understood; but *I believe thee, Robert.*" That is the very thought. We do not understand half the beliefs about Jesus (at least I do not) and we do not believe all we understand; but we *believe Jesus.* And that is a vastly different thing.

Many who have come from other communions into Unitarian churches have said that they had never heard Jesus preached so much in their lives before. And it is to be hoped that it is true. Were Jesus preached more, and doctrines about him less, perhaps the church would have a new lease of power. For all men recognize that he was the master of the art of living.

We do not believe in the doctrine of the trinity. But that does not trouble us over much. We spend little time or thought about it. But to Jesus himself we give our highest reverence and honor. We would have his life the inspiration of our lives; his teaching we would make our guide. To live in this Twentieth century in the spirit of Jesus is true Christianity. Most emphatically Unitarianism believes Jesus; and looks upon his life and the religious and ethical teachings that sprang naturally from it, as the most precious possession of the world. Unitarianism, whatever else it may be, is not a Christless faith. Unitarianism is not merely another sect added to the warring sects of Christianity. If it were merely that, it would not be worth preserving. There are enough sects and to spare. Their disagreements over the superficialities of the religious life are the disgrace and the

weakness of Christianity. In union only is strength. We are not much interested in the sectarian aspect of Unitarianism. Unitarianism has always been opposed to proselyting; yet it has grown amazingly, and still is growing, opinions to the contrary notwithstanding. And this for the very simple reason that kindred souls, men and women with a common aim, naturally come together.

We are not interested in the machinery of Unitarianism; but we are greatly interested in the spirit of Unitarianism. Were that spirit universal, the sects would forget their differences in the joy of a common task. There is work for the churches to do in the world. It is waiting to their hand. And it can only be done as they learn to pull together.

Unitarianism seeks to unite, not to divide. It is the union of those who with a common purpose, and in a united spirit, would worship God and serve man together. What we have in common are the important things. Unitarians welcome to their fellowship all who agree with them in spirit and aim; and they leave matters of belief to the individual and God.

Unitarianism is not merely an intellectual cult. If much of the intellectual life of the nation is identified with Unitarianism, we are grateful for it. If its liberal point of view has stamped itself on our literature as perhaps no other faith has, we are grateful for that. It has faith in the intellect and reason, as the guides to truth. It honors all the seekers for truth whatever their name, or wherever they may be. It holds that God has never left himself without wit-

nesses in any race or time. All truth is of God, whatever its source.

But religion is far more than a mere intellectual experience; and Unitarianism in particular is the religion of the whole man,—intellect, reason, heart, conscience, will, all of him,—directed Godward. Its simple faith of love to God and love to man as the summing up of the religious life, can be understood of all. If is the faith that Abraham Lincoln sought. Its appeal is universal. It is as broad as humanity, deep as human needs, simple as mother love. It was not altogether the demands of the intellect that prompted the Unitarian revolt against the grim theology of Calvinism. It was rather the instinctive shrinking of the heart from the cruelty of that grim faith and its God of wrath. Unitarianism is not coldly intellectual; it is warmly human.

Unitarianism is not an exclusive faith. It is not for an aristocracy of the intellect merely. Its very genius is democratic. One of its fundamental tenets is its faith in folks. It fully believes in and trusts our common humanity. In this it stands almost alone among the communions of Christendom. It is the spirit of democracy applied to religion. It affirms the universal brotherhood of man. And it means just that. It means that all are the children of the same Father, born of His spirit; and that all are brothers; white, black, red, yellow, rich, poor, wise, foolish, sinners and saints,—all are His children, and brothers. This is the coming brotherhood of man that some day shall bring peace to the earth, and mutual respect, understanding and sympathy. It is only a dream yet.

But earnest souls are working for it; and the dream is the inspiration of their work. Unitarianism, then, by its very genius, by its fundamental attitude towards man, is essentially democratic. To be false to that would be to be false to its highest mission. It has faith in the common people, whom God must have loved so much since he made so many of them, said Lincoln,—himself the embodiment of the genius of the common people.

Again, Unitarianism is not a creed or dogma. Indeed we glory in our creedlessness. Each soul is free to formulate its own belief. We do not ask that all men and women shall think alike (that would be a misfortune) but only that they shall think. We trust the soul. We have confidence that the normal soul, left free, will seek the truth as the sparks fly upward.

Unitarianism has broken with the idea that there is anything essentially sacred or binding in any dogma whatsoever. The repetition of a creed may be an intellectual stimulant, or it may be an intellectual narcotic; but in neither case is it religion. Here is a form of faith that really believes that religion is not creed but life. Not what you say during one hour on Sunday, but how you live during the other one hundred and sixty-seven hours of the week, is the test of your religion. "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but,—" How many of us can stand that test? We humble ourselves before the awful judgment. Our futile murmurings of "Lord, Lord," are shamed into silence before the quiet rebuking eyes;

and we creep out to seek humbly to do His will.

> "To do thy will is more than praise,
> As words are less than deeds;
> And simple truth can find thy ways
> We miss with chart of creeds."

These, then, are some of the things that Unitarianism is not,—at least in the thought of the present writer, who professes to speak only for himself. It is not a mere negation; it is not atheism; it is not a prayerless faith; it is not a Christless faith; it is not sectarianism; it is not an intellectual cult; it is not an exclusive faith; it is not a dogma.

What, then, is it? The answer has already been suggested. But before we proceed to greater detail, let me again remind you that no one person can speak for all Unitarians. He can only give his own testimony. What, then, is Unitarianism to me? It is difficult to put the answer into words. Can you tell what life is? What love is? You know these things only by living them. So with Unitarianism. (Now, indeed, do I wish that it had some other name. This hides, rather than reveals, what I would express. But we must make the best of it.) Unitarianism is an experience. It cannot be expressed in words, simply because it is vital, organic. It grows with the soul's growth, develops with the soul's development. It is not quite the same today as it was yesterday, nor will it be the same tomorrow as it is today. It is part of the individual much more than the body is. Now the body is changing all the time; and yet it is the same body. So my faith in God is not quite the same to-

day as it was yesterday, because I have had twenty-four hours God-experience since then; yet it is the same faith. In the same way Unitarianism is not static, but vital; and vitality is growth.

It has been said that because Unitarians have no formal creed, they do not believe anything. On the contrary, they believe so much that it is impossible to put it into a creed. Vital faith soon bursts the husks of creed. It wants to be a flower and a fruit; so it breaks out into the sunshine. Most of all do Unitarians believe in believing. But when you ask them to state their belief while you count three, they find it extremely difficult to respond; nay, impossible. It takes a life to express a real belief.

So I cannot tell definitely all that Unitarianism is to me. Who of us has not experienced the futility of attempting to put a vital experience into words? What is really essential escapes. The letter kills the spirit. And there is just the point. Unitarianism is a spirit. It is not a text book, nor a formula; it is a spirit. And being so, it eludes definition. In every attempted definition of religion, there is something left out. Men try again to define it; still there is something left out. That something is the soul's spiritual experience. It is just so with Unitarianism. It may well be that in the effort to put it into words we lose the real meaning of it. It is the individual soul's spiritual experience when left free to live its own life on its own terms. It is God in the soul.

Is this mysticism? If so, I am afraid I cannot help it. Is not such mysticism the very essence of the religious life? All the religious geniuses have been

mystics in this sense. Your soul and God,—are not these the two supremely important facts in the universe for you? And is it not the aim of religion to make these twain one in will, in love, in life?

And this at least *suggests* what Unitarianism is. For it is an attitude of the soul. Primarily it is the attitude of the soul towards God. We try to express this by the phrase, "Love to God." This is the first and great commandment, according to a very high authority. But the Unitarian must think of God as lovable before he can really love him. To him God is first of all the Father of infinite tenderness. That is why the Unitarian rejects the grim God of orthodoxy. You cannot really love a God who condemns the vast majority of his children to eternal damnation because they have not accepted a theological doctrine of which most of them have never even heard. You may profess to love such a God with your lips; but he is not really lovable. The Unitarian loves God because to him God is lovable. To him God is in very fact infinite love; and he will trust that love to the end.

But the love of God means more than this. It means devotion to all that is good and true and pure. It means the soul's reaching out for its own divine inheritance of goodness, and truth and purity. "Ye that love the Lord, hate evil." Only so *can* we love the Lord.

The Unitarian attitude towards God, then, is one of love for the lovable. It is aspiration towards the divine; it is communion, fellowship. We would walk with God through life and death,—to life.

Unitarianism is an attitude of the soul towards man. God being our Father, then we are all his children. This is a rather obvious platitude. But its significance is far-reaching. It undermines at once the doctrine of the total depravity of man. This doctrine is, indeed, repugnant to the Unitarian. His very inmost nature revolts against it. He cannot bring himself to believe that the all-wise Father made such a stupendous mistake as that. That God is our Father means that man is in essence divine. He may make mistakes; he may go wrong; he may commit sin, if you will (he has done all these things) but the heart of him is sound. Naturally he turns towards right and truth and love, not towards wrong and hate, and lies.

This is the Unitarian attitude towards man. It is revolutionary. It is diametrically opposed to the orthodox conception of the nature of man. To that man is a "fallen" being, naturally "depraved," and under the curse of God. To the Unitarian man never fell, but has always climbed, and is climbing still; he is not naturally depraved, but naturally good; he is not under the curse of God, but under the blessing of God.

This fundamental thought of Unitarianism has vast practical applications. It modifies all our ideas of education and reform. The modern education is trusting more and more to the natural instincts of the child. Its watchword is not repression, but expression. Now this is simply Unitarianism applied to education. The old idea, born largely of the dreary doctrine of "natural depravity," was repression of the

child, and distrust of his instincts. The new idea is expression of the child, and trust in his instincts. The points of view are wide asunder as the poles. In the new thought alone is hope of real education.

To the Unitarian, then, the soul is a thing of divine origin, and infinite possibilities. Hence the emphasis that Unitarianism places upon character as the supreme end of life, and the only salvation. Character is the final goal of all our efforts. The aim of Unitarianism is not so much to "save" souls as to make souls that are worth saving. Character is the test of religion. "By their fruits ye shall know them."

Unitarianism, again, is the attitude of the soul towards the universe. The universe is the expression of the indwelling life and love of God. It is not a dreary vale of tears; it is not accursed. It is good from center to circumference. There is no spot in it where God is not; and God is love. The universe reveals, not hides, the spirit of God. Through the gate of the senses it rushes into the soul to make it rich. Nature is the friend and helpmeet of man. All nature serves his spirit. What we call evolution is the unfolding of the divine purpose of God in ever increasing beauty and richness of life. To the Unitarian the world is supremely good. All its laws and forces help the soul in its high purpose.

Unitarianism is the attitude of the soul towards life. It holds that life here and now upon the earth, with all its struggle, its suffering and sorrow is good and beautiful. The possible richness of one day's life is immeasurable. The universe is offered to us; and we take just so much as our souls are large

enough to hold. Life is a splendid enterprise whereby the soul day by day may build itself into strength and beauty.

Unitarianism is the attitude of the mind towards truth. It seeks the truth wherever it may be found. It is open to every discovery of science, and to every word of prophet or of poet. It is not interested in proclaiming a dogma; it is interested in discovering the truth. To it truth is sacred, for it is the expression of the mind of God. Whether it be in Euclid or Isaiah, it is still the mind of God.

Unitarians are not afraid of the truth. We will trust it always and everywhere. We are assured that, however it may seem for a time, each new truth of science will only make God more clear. Evolution has not driven God out of his universe; it has revealed him as the inspiration of his universe. So with all truths when reverently received by the open mind. Science is verily "Thinking God's thoughts after him."

We reverence the reason of man as the instrument for seeking out and finding the truth of God. We dare to think that reason, left free, will seek the truth and ultimately reach it. We know full well that reason will make mistakes, has made mistakes; but we also know that these mistakes of reason are as nothing to the mistakes of authority posing as the word of God, enforced, as they have been, by rack, and faggot and dungeon. Authority in matters of religion has had to give way step by step before the advance of reason; and the line of her retreat has been marked by the tortured bodies of those seekers

of the truth whom she has slain. Unitarianism trusts that the reason of man, left free to range through all the infinite universe, will at last find the very truth of God.

All this Unitarianism is. But this is but a small part of the story. Unitarianism is the attitude of the soul towards these realities of God, man, the universe, life, truth. But it is much more than a mere passive attitude. It is an inspiration, a spur urging the soul on to ever finer achievements. It is dynamic and vital. It is the stirring of the very life of God in the soul. It believes that religion is life. It looks for a high destiny or this God-born man in whom it has faith. Its faith is a faith that works.

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Size, 5 3-4 x 8 1-2 inches; pages, 463; $2.25 postpaid.

THE purpose of this work is to furnish a complete, impartial, and candid record of the origin and growth of American Unitarianism, with accounts of its organization, its progress, and its relation to all present-day movements for social and religious betterment, all of which is presented in "the true spirit of the historical method, without reference to local interests and without sectional preferences." Controversial treatment is thus happily avoided. The author has made long and thorough examination of original manuscripts and journals, as well as many magazines, newspapers, and printed reports of various kinds. The result has been to bring together into a single octavo volume of 475 pages much valuable material, heretofore to be found only in widely scattered sources, and a large array of facts not obtainable elsewhere. The volume is fully indexed, making all references to any one topic readily accessible. The book thus becomes a valuable reference work as well as a thoroughly readable and instructive history. It has been written with special reference to its helpfulness in explaining the Unitarian attitude and temper. The opening chapters begin with the English Sources of American Unitarianism, followed by chapters upon the Liberal Side of Puritanism, the Growth of Democracy in the Churches, and the Silent advance of Liberalism. Then follows the organization of the American Unitarian Association, and its various activities as the national executive organization of our churches are fully set forth. Chapters are given to the accounts of the Sunday School Society, the Boston Fraternity of Churches, the Women's National Alliance, the Post Office Mission, and other enterprises which mark the spirit of Unitarian endeavor. The relation of Unitarianism to philanthropy, reforms, education, and literature, receive special chapters of unusual interest. The closing chapter treats of the future of Unitarianism.

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THE American Unitarian Association is the working missionary organization of the Unitarian churches of America. It seeks to promote sympathy and united action among Liberal Christians, and to spread the principles which are believed by Unitarians to be essential to civil and religious liberty and progress and to the attainments of the spiritual life. To this end it supports missionaries, establishes and maintains churches, holds conventions, aids in building meeting-houses, publishes, sells and gives away books, sermons, tracts, hymn-books, and devotional works.

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[No. 295]

THE STORY OF CHANNING

His Life, Thought and World-Wide Influence

By

Jabez T. Sunderland, D.D.

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"If there ever was a Christian, if there ever was a man that manifested the spirit of Christ on earth, it was William Ellery Channing."

—*Ex-President W. H. Taft.*

"Channing! thy words are great and bold;
At times they seem to me
Like Luther's in the days of old,
Half battles for the free."

—*Longfellow.*

"Channing's principles,—his faith in God, his faith in man, his reliance on reason,—are the principles of universal religion, and can never be outgrown. These principles are spreading, as enlightenment spreads; they are growing, as human thought grows; they are permeating the life of the age; it needs no gift of prophecy to see, that, sooner or later, they will dominate the intelligent world."—*Minot J. Savage.*

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PROBABLY it is no exaggeration to call William Ellery Channing's name the greatest in the history of Modern Liberal or Progressive Christianity.

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A Biography of Rare Charm

The story of Channing is one of the most charming in American biography; only one must look down below the rather plain surface into its radiant heart. It does not have in it much of outward adventure or excitement, but it does tell of an inward life of fascinating activity and energy, of an extraordinarily wide range of interests, of rare simplicity and sincerity, of fresh and bold thinking, of constantly new and daring excursions in search of truth, of deep piety, of keen appreciation of the beauties of nature, of unfailing love

of humanity, of bodily weakness and suffering triumphed over by power of will, of joy, of constant growth, of soul-youth becoming more marked with the advance of years, of singular spiritual beauty, of the most heroic loyalty to duty and of the highest moral ideals.

Channing was born in 1780, the mid-point of the Revolutionary War, and died in 1842. His birthplace was Newport, Rhode Island, the beautiful city by the sea, at that time commercially the rival of New York. He was educated at Harvard College, and spent his mature life as a preacher in Boston.

A High-Spirited, Manly Boy

His father was a respected lawyer in Newport, for a time the Attorney General of the State. His mother was an Ellery, daughter of the Ellery who was one of the signers of the American Declaration of Independence. He was third in a family of nine children. Those who knew him only in his later life, when his health was so delicate, and he had to be guarded as carefully as a tender plant, found it hard to picture him in boyhood as anything else than weak and frail. But in fact, he was in early life vigorous, athletic, full of spirit, full of daring, full of decision. There was no more hearty or joyous laugh than his. No boy could run faster, or excel him in wrestling, or climb with quicker hand or surer foot to the mastheads of the ships in the harbor. Never quarrelsome, never disposed to push his own claim, he

yet was a quick champion of the wronged among his playfellows. He would see none of his companions abused and bullied by others larger and stronger than they. Yet all the while the active, high-spirited boy was tender in his feelings, conscientious, religious,—the true father of the man that was to be.

There were two shadows on Channing's boyhood. One came from the dark and stern Calvinistic theology under the influence of which he was reared. The other was occasioned by the death of his father, when the son was thirteen, leaving the mother and her large family with so little means that they were compelled to experience the hardships of self-denial and poverty.

A Significant Story

A little while before the death of his father an incident occurred which made a lasting impression upon the thoughtful boy, and operated powerfully to open his young eyes to the cruelty and hollowness of the theology which he was hearing preached all around him. The story is so significant that it should be repeated here.

He was taken by his father in his chaise one Sunday to a neighboring town to hear a noted preacher. "He listened attentively to the sermon. With glowing rhetoric, the preacher went on to describe the lost state of man, his helplessness, the need of earnest prayer as the condition of receiving divine aid. In the view of the speaker a curse seemed to rest upon the earth, and darkness and

horror to veil the face of nature. William, for his part, supposed that henceforth those who believed all this would abandon all other things to seek this salvation, and that amusement and earthly business would no longer occupy a moment. The service over, they went out of the church, and his father, in answer to the remark of some person, said with a decisive tone: 'Sound doctrine, Sir.' 'It is all true, then,' was the boy's inward reflection. A heavy weight fell on his heart. He wanted to speak to his father; he expected his father would speak to him in relation to this tremendous crisis of things. They entered the chaise and drove along, but absorbed in thinking about the sorrows and awful things they had been hearing, the boy was silent,—he could not find words to speak. Presently his father began to whistle. At length they reached home; but instead of calling the family together, and telling them of the appalling intelligence which the preacher had given, his father took off his boots, put his feet toward the fireplace, and began quietly to read his newspaper.

"William was amazed; but not being given to talking he asked no explanations. Soon, however, the questions arose. What did it all mean? Could what he had heard be true? No! his father did not believe it; people did not believe it! It was **not** true. He felt that he had been trifled with; that the preacher had deceived him."

From this time on he carried in his mind a deep distrust of the prevailing theology of the churches, and a determination to examine religious matters for himself, and not to pretend to believe anything which he did not really believe and believe for good reasons.

Two Years in the South

Following his graduation from college, at the age of eighteen, young Channing spent nearly two years as a tutor in a family of wealth in Richmond, Va.

Here, surrounded by all that was most elegant in southern life, and mingling in the very best southern society, he found much that attracted and charmed him; and yet, in the midst of the fascination, gradually his eyes were opened to the terrible evils and wrongs of slavery. He saw the institution at its very best; yet what he saw made him a life-long enemy of it, and laid the foundation for that great anti-slavery work which he was to do in after years.

These two years at Richmond were years also of very earnest and severe study. He was hungry for knowledge. He had chosen his life work—that of the ministry—and was eager to make the most broad and ample preparation possible for it. But he had not learned to care for his health. Indeed, his head was full of extreme stoical notions, and he thought the body might be hardened, if not wholly ignored. Accordingly he habitually studied until 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning, and

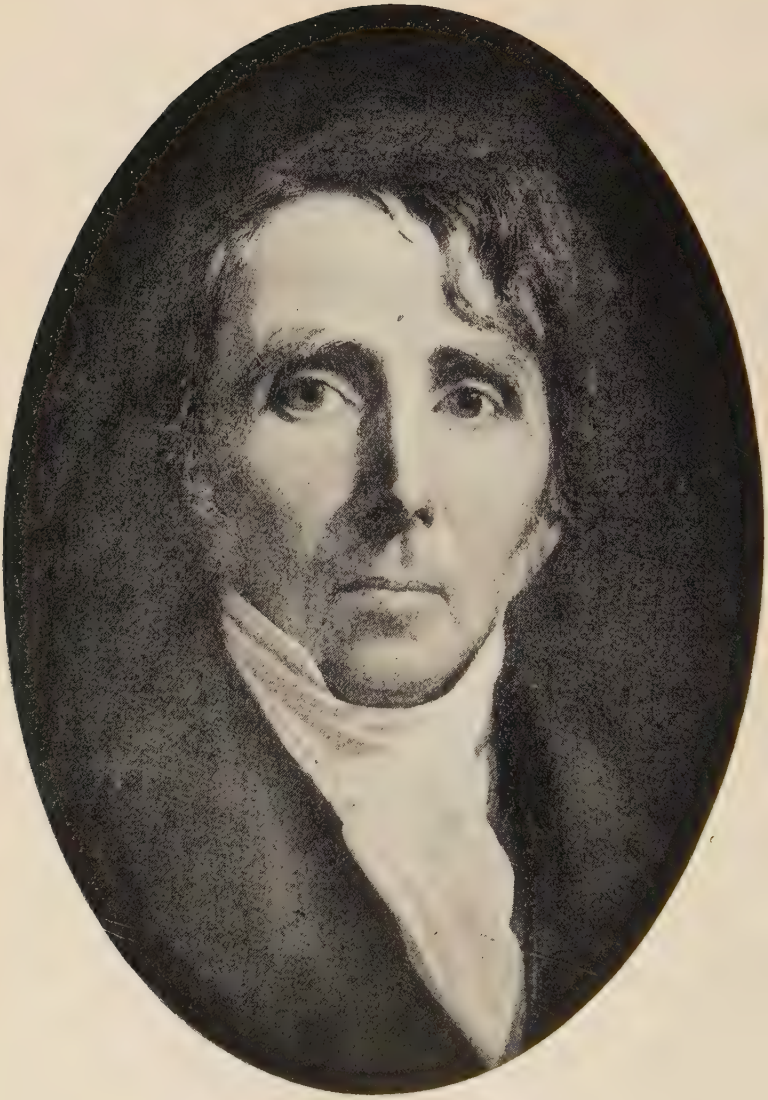
often later. He accustomed himself to sleep on the bare floor, so as to overcome any tendency in himself to effeminacy, and that he might be the more ready to spring up the moment he waked, so as to go on with his study. In the meantime he made his diet of the most abstemious kind. Of course to all this there was but one possible end. His health gave way, and before the two years were past he was obliged to go home an invalid,—alas! an invalid for life! So severe are the penalties of nature's broken laws, even if the breaking be done with the noblest motives!

A year and a half at home, tenderly cared for by his mother and his many friends, restored him to a sufficient degree of health to allow him to take up again his theological studies.

Begins Ministry in Boston

In the year 1802, a little before he had reached the age of twenty-three, he found himself ready to begin his chosen life work as a Christian minister.

Never did a young man enter the ministry with purer motives or with a more beautiful and entire consecration. Many of his friends had desired him to choose the profession of the law—his father's calling. But no! Nothing seemed to him half so important as religion. To teach truth, to labor to dissipate ignorance and superstition, to comfort human sorrow, to succor the weak and the tempted, to help dry up the great dark river of sin and suffering that flows through the earth—



Channing

no other possible work seemed to him comparable in nobleness or worth with this.

His preaching at once attracted attention by its fervor, seriousness and beauty. Almost immediately calls were extended him by two different churches in Boston—the Brattle Street, a strong and wealthy society, and the Federal Street, a society comparatively poor and weak. With his characteristic modesty, he chose the smaller and poorer church; and at once entered that pulpit which was to be his throne of loving, beneficent power all his life, and which through him was to become known over the earth.

Three Periods of Channing's Life

Channing's public life may be divided into three periods: the first of thirteen years, from 1802 to 1815, in which he was a quiet pastor and preacher, his time and strength devoted almost wholly to his own church; the second period of about fifteen years, from 1815 to 1830, in which he was the acknowledged leader of that religious movement which resulted in the establishment of Unitarianism in this country; and the third period of twelve years, from 1830 to his death in 1842, in which his energies were largely devoted to great philanthropic movements and subjects of social and political reform, such as anti-slavery, peace, temperance, education, beneficences among the poor, and the like, which made him as widely known as a philanthropist and social reformer as he had become known as a preacher and religious teacher.

Let us look at each of these periods in some detail.

First Period, 1802–1815, Channing as a Pastor and Preacher

During the first of the three, which extended over the first thirteen years of his ministerial life, he was, as has been said, the quiet, laborious pastor, doing his work lovingly and conscientiously among his people, and preaching on Sundays sermons of singular spiritual sweetness and power, which edified and delighted his hearers, and drew ever larger and larger congregations.

A New Kind of Sermon

Channing was not only an attractive preacher, —he was a new kind of preacher. Indeed, he did much to revolutionize for the better the preaching of New England and eventually of the whole country. Up to his day New England preaching had been in the main hard, formal, dry, without literary grace or much human quality. It had been severely theological, and, to make it more dreary, it had been the almost universal practice of preachers to quote, in all sermons, very extensively from the Bible, texts, texts, texts, bolstering up everything by scripture, giving chapter and verse. Channing put aside all this, and introduced a new method of sermonizing, making his discourses living, direct, natural, human. His thought was prevailingly ethical, spiritual and practical rather than scriptural or theological. Keeping his hold firmly upon the Bible, he yet felt that the soul of man was more directly from God than any book could be, and hence his mightiest appeals were always to the consciences,

the hearts, the reason, the moral and spiritual intuitions of his hearers, rather than to any formal "Thus saith the Lord." Taking a great theme (for he always chose great themes) he unfolded it in a wholly natural way, speaking with all the directness, simplicity and sincerity of a man to his fellow man in earnest conversation, making no appeal to scripture unless his thought could be strengthened thereby, using no ornament or embellishment for the sake of ornament or embellishment, but uttering his thought so clearly, so candidly, so earnestly, and with such classic chasteness and beauty of expression, that all who heard were fascinated.

It was simply impossible after Channing that the old style of hard, dry sermons, of the formal, theological, textual kind, should not pass away. The genius of Channing touched them, and lo! everywhere they began to disappear, and something more living, natural, human and uplifting began to take their place.

Channing's Physical Appearance

Physically, Channing had few or no advantages as a preacher, but certain considerable disadvantages. For one thing, he was small of stature, weighing not more than about a hundred pounds. Persons meeting him for the first time on the street or at his own home, in the days after he became famous, would often involuntarily exclaim, "What! is this the great Dr. Channing?" And yet all witnesses agree that when he arose in

the pulpit such was his dignity and the power of his great, calm eyes, and the sweet solemnity of his whole bearing, that he seemed to every one far larger than he was, and persons meeting him for the first time after listening to a discourse from him were very commonly surprised to find, even although he had been before their eyes for an hour, that he was not physically a large man.

Channing in the Pulpit

Emerson declares that Channing was one of the three most eloquent speakers he ever heard.

His biographer, William Henry Channing, thus describes his appearance in the pulpit. "There is no excitement in the audience, but deep, calm expectation. With a somewhat rapid and elastic step, a person small in stature, thin and pale, and carefully enveloped, ascends the pulpit stair. It is he. For a moment he deliberately and benignantly surveys the large congregation, as if drinking in the influence of so many human beings; and then, laying aside his outer garments and putting on the black silk gown, he selects the hymn and passage from the scripture, and, taking his seat, awaits in quiet contemplation the time for commencing the service. What impresses us now in his appearance is its exceeding delicacy, refinement, and spiritualized beauty. In the hollow eye, the sunken cheeks, and in the deep lines about the mouth, the debility of years has left an ineffaceable impress. But on the polished brow, with its rounded temples, shadowed by one fall-

ing lock, and on the beaming countenance, there hovers a serenity which seems to brighten the whole head with a halo."

As he goes forward to his discourse, "there are no expletives, no fulminations, no fanatical outpourings. But the small figure dilates,—the luminous gray eye now flashes with indignation, now softens in pity,—and the outstretched arm and clenched hand are lifted in sign of protest and warning, as the wrongs which man inflicts on man are presented. . . . Sin and degradation are made to appear unspeakably mournful . . . ; every human soul becomes venerable to us, as an heir of God and co-heir of Christ."

There seems to have been something impressive about everything that Channing did and said in the pulpit. Hymns which as other men read them were commonplace, as they fell from his lips were full of strange power. His prayers were not like other men's prayers; they were audible communings of the human with the divine spirit. He seemed in prayer as one consciously in the presence of and beholding the Invisible. As he prayed the fashion of his countenance was altered. A solemn hush and a deep awe fell upon the congregation, and it seemed as if every word that fell from those pale, earnest, trembling lips brought with it a blessing from heaven.

Wherein lay Channing's power over others? What made his words so weighty? It was the

great soul. It was the rich thought, the candor, the wisdom, the sincerity, the lofty character, the profound piety back of the words.

What is Eloquence?

In a sermon preached by him at the ordination of Charles F. Barnard and Frederick T. Gray as Ministers at Large in Boston, Channing gave his conception of what it is to be eloquent. Said he to the two young men, just entering upon their ministry: "You, of course, desire to avoid the greatest of all defects in a preacher—that of being tame and dull; and your security from this is to be found, not in noise and gesture, not in the commonplaces of passion, but in keeping your minds and hearts in free and powerful action. This inward life will give life to style and delivery, and nothing else will. This is the only secret of eloquence. Eloquence is not a trick of words. It is the utterance of great truths, so clearly discerned, so deeply felt, so bright, so burning, that they cannot be confined, that they create for themselves a style and manner which carry them far into other lives; and of this eloquence there is but one fount, and that is inward life, force of thought, force of feeling."

This exactly explains Channing's power as a preacher. Every word that came from him was so instinct with his own quiet but intense "inward life," was so charged with "force of thought and feeling," and thus was so truly a part of his deepest self, that it carried extraordinary weight.

His speech was great because he was great, and because every word came calmly yet with the white heat of a mighty sincerity straight out of his great soul.

At the end of thirteen years of devoted work, given almost exclusively to his own society, in which his church grew strong, and a new house of worship was built to accommodate the growing congregation, an unlooked-for change suddenly came into the quiet preacher's life. Up to this time almost nothing had occurred to give him a name outside his own city. But now the day arrived when his fame was to sound forth over the whole land and across the sea.

Second Period. 1815 1830, Channing the Leader of the New Unitarian Movement

This brings us to the second period of Channing's ministerial life—that from 1815 to 1830—which may in a sense be called the controversial period.

It should be clearly understood that Channing began his public life as a Congregationalist minister, supposedly orthodox; and that his church was a Congregational church, also supposedly orthodox. The change of both pastor and people from orthodoxy to Unitarianism was gradual and almost imperceptible. No one had planned to bring it about; it was the result partly of the naturally independent and progressive character of his own mind, and partly of widespread liberalizing influences which were active in New England at that time and which affected not only Channing

and his church but many other ministers and their churches.

These liberalizing influences had come from many sources. But largely they were a natural and inevitable reaction against the stern and dark Calvinism which had been the prevailing theology of the New England churches from the beginning, and which had been made still more dark and awful by the powerful influence of Jonathan Edwards.

Meaning of the Unitarian Movement

Channing's revolt against orthodoxy, indeed, the whole liberal or Unitarian revolt against orthodoxy, was not primarily a protest against the doctrine of the trinity, as has been widely supposed. To be sure, to most minds it involved the trinity; but this was secondary. The reason why it was secondary is plain. The question of the trinity is speculative; it is a question of the intellect; it is not moral. The doctrine of the trinity was rejected by Channing and others on intellectual grounds, on the grounds that it is unreasonable, self-contradictory and unscriptural; but the central, the fundamental protest of Channing and those who with him led the liberal or Unitarian movement, was deeper than intellectual; it was ethical. It was the solemn revolt of what was deepest and holiest in the moral nature of man against the conception of an immoral God, against a God who could do so unspeakably unjust, so morally monstrous a thing as

to create a human race of sentient beings, and of his own will elect one part to be happy forever, and another part, with no fault of their own, and with nothing that they could do to prevent it, to writhe in endless torment.

The first phase of this revolt against Calvinism took the form of what was known as Arminianism. It asserted the freedom of the human will. It denied election and predestination on the part of God, and moral helplessness on the part of man; and proclaimed as its gospel: "Whosoever will may be saved."

The Whole Calvinistic System Condemned

This was a good beginning; but when men had begun to think with independence and to apply rational and moral tests to religion, there could be no stop with Arminianism, or the mere overthrow of the doctrine of election and foreordination; there could be no pause or going back until the whole unreasonable and morally outrageous theological system of Calvinistic orthodoxy had been overthrown,—with its assertion of a mythical Adam and a mythical fall of the race as the result of a mythical sin in a mythical garden; and mankind "totally depraved," "wholly corrupt in body and soul," "made opposite to all good and wholly inclined to all evil"; and a hell of eternal torment for the whole race as a punishment for Adam's sin unless a ransom could be found; and the necessity for God to come to earth in the form of a man and be crucified as an in-

finite sacrifice in order to effect such a ransom; and then, as the result of it all, the salvation of such a part of the race as God from all eternity had elected to be saved, and the damnation of all the rest:—I say, when men had begun really to bring religious doctrines for judgment before the bar of reason and conscience, it could be only a question of time when such a system of theology, born in a dark and cruel past, founded so wholly on fiction, so dishonoring to God, and so deeply violating every rational and moral instinct of the human soul, should be wholly discredited and give place to something better.

This was what happened. Calvinism gave way, little by little, to liberal Christianity,—passing by stages not only through Arminianism, but in many minds also through Arianism and Socinianism—forms of semi-Unitarianism—to full Unitarianism at last.

Channing at the beginning of his ministry, although nominally orthodox and pastor of a nominally orthodox church, seems to have been already in his thought either consciously Unitarian or well on the way toward Unitarianism. But he progressed from the first. All his study and thinking carried him forward, his convictions became clearer, and in due time he recognized himself as unmistakably Unitarian, and declared himself to the world as such with no uncertain voice.

Channing's Unitarianism is sometimes spoken of as very conservative. In some respects such it was. It is easy to draw a distinction between the views expressed in some of his writings concerning the inspiration of the Bible, and revelation, and Jesus, and especially miracles, and the views on these subjects held by many distinguished Unitarians who came after him, for example, Theodore Parker and Emerson in this country, and Martineau in England. But we should not overlook the fact that there was an earlier Channing and a later Channing. He advanced and broadened in thought to the last. Even after he had taken his place before the public as a Unitarian, and as more than any other the leader of the Unitarian movement, he did not cease to advance. Had he lived on, to receive the benefit of the great new light which, in the next generation following his own, began to shine upon religion from many sources, notably from a better biblical scholarship, from a study of the great religious faiths of mankind outside of Christianity, and especially from the great scientific doctrine of Evolution, there seems much reason to believe that this distinction would mainly if not wholly have disappeared, and that his theological thought would have become practically identical with that of these later men. Certain it is that he was as fearless a thinker, as bold a seeker of truth, as any of the great leaders who have succeeded him.

Channing's Unitarianism. His Growing Thought

Liberal Thought Spreading in New England

As has been already intimated, the same revolt against Calvinism and the same growth in the direction of a more liberal theology which took place in Channing and his church, was widespread in New England, and beyond. Even as early as the time of the American Revolution there was much liberal thinking among the people and much liberal preaching in Congregational pulpits. Twenty years later, in the year 1800, it was said that of the nine Congregational churches in Boston there was not one in which both pastor and people were not seriously tainted with the new heresy.

By the year 1810 lines began to be drawn. Certain ministers and churches began to be pointed to as not sound in the faith, and there was talk of ecclesiastical discipline. The habit of frequent exchanges of pulpits had long been common among the clergy. This began to be interrupted. Certain ministers refused any longer to exchange with certain other ministers who were thought to be preaching false doctrine. More and more the conservatives and the progressives drew apart, and there were signs of a permanent separation. This was deplored by the liberals, who did not want a new sect, but only demanded freedom of thought and belief within the old denomination. The disfellowshipping was done by the conservatives, not by the liberals The separation when it came was caused wholly by the conservatives, who

refused longer to recognize as brethren those who preached or accepted the new thought.

The Crisis

About the year 1815 the crisis came. Without going into details it is enough to say that when the new movement found itself compelled to become a thing separate and apart, Channing became its recognized leader.

The Great Baltimore Sermon

From 1815 to 1830 the fires of controversy between the old and the new blazed high all over New England. Channing did not love controversy; yet his heart was warmly with the new thought; and the new thought was not understood. Of course its enemies could not be trusted to set it forth in a way acceptable to its adherents. Its friends must come forward to its defense, and let the world know just what it was they stood for. Thus plainly summoned by duty, Channing did not hesitate, but gave to the world in 1819 his great sermon at the ordination of Jared Sparks in Baltimore, defining Unitarianism.

The sermon probably made a greater sensation than any other discourse ever preached in America before or since. From that time on there was no mistaking what the new movement was.

Channing followed his Baltimore sermon at intervals by several others almost equally powerful as defenses of the new faith—notably his discourse at the dedication of the Second Unitarian Church of New York City in 1826, on "Unitarian Christianity Most Favorable to Piety."

Channing's Courage and Outspokenness

Always modest and desirous of peace, no man was ever braver than was Channing in this trying time. He shrunk from no utterance that he felt ought to be made. When he spoke it was with no uncertain sound. He dealt tremendous blows not only in defense of what he believed to be true, but against what he believed to be error.

Channing is often misrepresented here. It is common to speak of him as one who always expressed his own views but did not antagonize the views of others,—one who, as the phrase is, "preached things positive but not things negative,"—"built up but did not tear down." In a sense this was true, but in a sense it was not. No man ever aimed at the constructive as the ultimate end of all his efforts more constantly than did Channing. But he was not such a Don Quixote as to suppose that construction on any large scale can be accomplished without some destruction. Before corn can be grown the sod must be turned over and the grass and weeds occupying it must be destroyed. Before a new building can be erected, any structure occupying the ground before must come down.

Channing not only set forth his Unitarian ideas in clear light, but he also took the greatest pains to show how they differed from the old ideas, and in what in his judgment they were superior. He held up the old faith and the new side by side, doctrine by doctrine, and said to the people,

"Look on the two and judge between them." Nor did he deal only in honeyed words. With reference to what he believed false and harmful he was unflinching in his condemnation. Perhaps the most stinging blow the orthodox doctrine of the atonement ever received from any man it received from Channing when he spoke of Calvary, according to the orthodox scheme, as "the central gallows of the universe."

Yet though Channing was thus a very Titan in controversy, still, as has already been said, controversy was always distasteful to him, and like most of the leading Unitarians of this country who have succeeded him, he avoided it whenever he could consistently, and never engaged in it except as a matter of duty.

His Candor and Fairness in Controversy

Moreover, he never replied to his critics or answered those who answered him. He said what he had to say in the clearest, most direct and telling manner possible, and then left it to do its work. Thus he never fell into any personal disputes or wrangles. Furthermore, he was one of the most candid and fair of controversialists. No man ever took more pains to represent his opponent correctly. No man was ever more careful to speak appreciatively of what he believed to be true and good in the doctrine of his adversary. He always distinguished carefully between doctrines and the men who held the doctrines; and while condemning most severely such doctrines as those

of election and reprobation, the fall of the race in Adam, total depravity, and the vicarious atonement as generally taught in his day, he always took great pains to express admiration of the Christian character of many of the men who held and preached these dreadful doctrines.

Thus, although Channing appears for fifteen years of his mid-life as the confessed leader in a great theological controversy, yet he is scarcely less admirable in it all than he has been in the quiet work of his own pulpit and parish before the controversy began,—and this because he carries through all the conflict a spirit so frank, so sincere, so high above all mere petty party feeling, so appreciative of truth and goodness wherever seen, whether among friends or enemies. Theological controversies conducted in the spirit which Channing manifested would not desolate the earth, dry up the streams of religious life, and turn fruitful plains into deserts, as such controversies have so often done. Carried on as he carried them on, they would help men to a better understanding of each other, and bring the truth into clearer light for all who care to see.

Third Period, 1830-1842, Channing a Great Leader of Social Reforms

We come now to the third and perhaps the most interesting period of Channing's life—that extending from 1830, when his work as a controversialist and as an active minister virtually ends, to his death in 1842. During this period it is true he still continues the loved and honored pastor of

the Federal Street Church in Boston, and to some extent the theological leader of the new Unitarian movement in America; but he appears now also on a still broader field of activity and influence, viz.: that of preacher by tongue, but especially by pen, to the whole nation on those great subjects of social and political reform and philanthropy, which had grown more and more dear to his heart as the years had gone on.

An Assistant in his Pulpit and Parish

In 1824 his church gave him an associate, the Rev. Ezra Stiles Gannett, to assist him in his pulpit and his parish duties, at the same time relieving him from much of his responsibility, and extending to him permission to be away from his regular ministerial work as much as the growing frailty of his health might require. From this time on, his summers, from May until October, were invariably spent away from Boston, sometimes in the mountains, or at quiet places in the interior, but generally at his beautiful Island Home, near Newport, of which he had come into possession through his wife. Here amidst the loveliness of nature, which always had a soothing and invigorating effect upon him, amid the endearments of his own family, and far removed from all care for his parish, he was able to undertake that larger work which with the duties of an active pastorate resting upon his shoulders he had been unable heretofore to find either time or strength to do.

Anti-Slavery

When we turn to Channing as a philanthropist and social reformer we see at once that his most important labor was in the direction of anti-slavery. The work he did in the cause of freedom for the slave was very different from that of Garrison, or Phillips, or most of the recognized anti-slavery leaders. It was a quiet work; a work done almost entirely through his pen. But it is the judgment of men wiser than I that it was second in importance to no work accomplished in all the trying years that led up to the final emancipation by President Lincoln.

Channing had a singularly powerful hold upon the thoughtful minds of America, both North and South; and probably no one in this country ever wrote on the slavery question whose words were read so candidly and weighed so seriously by both the friends and the foes of slavery as were his. He gave to the public no fewer than seven small books or pamphlets of considerable length on the subject, all of which attracted wide attention. Perhaps the most important were his book on "Slavery," issued in 1835, and his masterly "Letter to Henry Clay on the Annexation of Texas," in 1837.

Of these publications George William Curtis said: "I challenge for these two documents the merit of being the most permanent and imperishable contributions to the literature of the anti-slavery cause,—as expressing its fundamental rea-

son, and principle and scope. And when I say this I do not for a moment forget words of the prophet and the John Knox of anti-slavery, Mr. Garrison. I do not forget the mingled trumpet and flute of the speech of Wendell Phillips. I do not forget that great appeal, that romance in which the whole life of slavery figured, which was borne into every land, which was translated into every language, and which melted the heart of the world as it told the story of Uncle Tom. I do not forget, that, as Emerson said, in every anti-slavery meeting eloquence was 'dog-cheap;' but the word of Channing, perfectly tranquil in tone, stands, it seems to me, always separate and apart. It stands there, as he truly said, for the conviction that 'God'—these are his words—'God has not entrusted the reform of the world to passion.' It was the calm and tranquil and permanent statement, it was the argument which our children's children will read, and feel to be invincible."

The Great Lenox Address

The last public utterance of Channing was a wonderful address delivered at Lenox, Mass., on the Anniversary of Emancipation in the British West Indies. The address has been appropriately called his "Swan Song." On the last summer of his life, indeed, only a few weeks before his death, he was sojourning for a little while for his health among the quiet, beautiful hills of Berkshire. As the anniversary of the West Indies Emancipation

drew near he was moved to write, as from day to day he felt strong enough, an address upon the subject. And when it was done, calling together a little company of the country folk of Lenox, he delivered to them his message. If any persons desire to put themselves in touch with Channing at his loftiest and to feel the power of a plea for freedom, rich in thought and throbbing with the noblest emotion, equal in eloquence to anything Wendell Phillips ever uttered, and on the highest possible moral plane, let them read that beautiful, wonderful Lenox address. Then they will really understand Channing, the anti-slavery reformer.

His Many Philanthropies and Social Reforms

But Channing's philanthropy reached out in many directions besides that of freedom for the slave. One of the best charities ever inaugurated in this country was the Ministry to the Poor, in Boston. Channing was largely instrumental in establishing that, and carrying it forward to success. No man of his day was more deeply interested in the laboring classes than he. He meditated long and deeply over the problem of their elevation; and to this subject several of his most thoughtful and impressive public discourses were devoted.

Questions of education came in also for a large share of his attention. He labored earnestly for prison reform, and for abolition of capital punishment. The cause of temperance deeply interested

him, although in his day the modern temperance reform as we see it now had not come into existence. His writings and addresses against war were powerful and widely influential. Few men in American history have done so much to promote the cause of peace as Channing. He interested himself in the subject of poor-houses; female employment societies; bake-houses for the poor; associations for the relief of the aged, the sick and debtors; societies for assisting emigrants; for the reformation of prostitutes; associations for mutual improvement among mechanics, and many other kindred philanthropies.

Says Miss Elizabeth Peabody in her valuable book of reminiscences: "But for the ill health which he dragged like a chain and ball, Channing would certainly have been felt as a man of affairs. He never has had due credit for practical wisdom by those who have thought of him as a lofty theorist. His thought far outran his times; many of the methods of usefulness which society just now seems to be inventing were suggested in his conversations. He saw that intemperance must be treated as in part a physical disease; that the grog-shop must be met by the counter attraction of wholesome amusements; that agriculture and cooking must be made branches of education; that children must be taught to draw, and encouraged to make collections of minerals, shells, etc.; that

their interest in outward things must indicate the true educational method."

As he grew older he became more and more deeply interested in these things. Increasingly he came to look upon Christianity as finding its truest expression in works of practical beneficence; and more and more he distrusted any so-called Christianity that did not aim above everything else to do practical good among men.

Last Days and Last Words

Thus with his sympathies for his fellow men constantly widening and his interest in every wise beneficence constantly deepening, he approached the end of his earthly career. He died at the age of 62, in the midst of his usefulness. In spirit he grew younger instead of older. A year or two before his death a friend asked him what time of life he had found the happiest. "About the age of 60," he replied, with a smile. He was just sixty at the time. Never was his mind so full of plans of usefulness as the last year of his life.

He died amidst the mountains of Vermont, whither he had gone from Lenox in search of that health which he was not to find in this world. His last words were: "I have received many messages from the Spirit."

A Great Religious Reformer

Channing was a great religious reformer—one of the greatest of the modern world. He was also a great social reformer. He was the second because he was the first.

As a religious reformer he aimed at two things.

The first was to purify Christianity from the corruptions which he believed had found their way into it since the days of Christ and His Apostles, to bring it back to the simplicity, the spirituality, the high ethical quality and the social vitality of the teachings of the New Testament. He found the essence, the soul of the religion of Jesus in his two Great Commands of Love to God and Man, his rule for social conduct which we call Golden, his injunction "Love your enemies," his thought of God's Fatherhood and Man's Brotherhood. In these profound theistic, ethical and social teachings Channing saw implied, wrapped up, of necessity, the most far-reaching and vital possible ethical and social reforms.

Channing's second aim as a religious reformer was to introduce reason into religion, and make it a thing not stationary, not always looking to the past for its inspiration and its ideals, but a thing progressive, living, pressing forward, welcoming new light, the friend of science and all modern knowledge.

Relation of his Social Reforms to his Religious Faith

In his earlier life Channing was more theoretical in his preaching, in his later life more practical. This order was logical; the broad, rational, noble principles, and the humane doctrines of his earlier ministry led naturally and necessarily to the philanthropies and social reforms of his later ministry. In other words, his philanthropies and social activities were simply the practical applica-

tion to life of his theology. They flowed from his theology as inevitably as a stream from its fountain; they could no more be separated from it than a river from its source.

To believe truly, really, deeply, in love to men as well as love to God, in love even to enemies, in doing to all men as we would have them do to us, in our relation to all men as brothers—children of a common Father—this of necessity means to be on fire with enthusiasm for human welfare, for social uplift, for the salvation of the world from everything that hurts, degrades and destroys, for the bringing in of the reign of love, righteousness and peace—which is the Kingdom of God—upon the earth.

Channing's Theology

Channing's theology may be described in another way. It may be summed up in three great doctrines, or ideas.

First, the rectitude of the character of God.

Second, the worth of man; and,

Third, soul-liberty, or the sacredness of reason.

His idea of the rectitude of the character of God necessarily banished out of existence all such doctrines as an eternal hell of torments, infants lost through Adam's fall, and an arbitrary election of one part of the race to be saved and another to be damned; because these doctrines are inconsistent with any rectitude of character in God. God could not be a just being, not to say a merciful, if these doctrines were true.

His second idea, of the worth of man, or the dignity of human nature, swept away the old doctrine of total depravity and laid a firm foundation for beneficences, and all works of practical reform, mercy and charity among men. For if every human being, even the lowest, is of so much worth, and has such divine possibilities slumbering within him, how great, how necessary, how inspiring, how morally compelling, becomes the work of instructing the ignorant, reforming the erring, lending a hand to the weak and the tempted, succoring the unfortunate, doing anything and everything in one's power to lift men up, to help them to realize the high, the divine possibilties of their nature.

His third doctrine, of the sacredness of reason and of soul-liberty, put him in sympathy with all truth and all progress and made him the life-long foe of all slaveries, whether of body or soul.

The Place of Channing and of Liberal Religion in the World

We come now to a brief inquiry concerning Channing's place in the world, and also concerning the place of the liberal religious movement with which he was associated.

There have been three very great forward movements in Christianity during modern times.

One was the sixteenth century revolt against Rome, known as the Protestant Reformation, of which the most important leaders were Luther, Calvin, and Zwingli,—a movement which broke the tyrannical power of the Roman Catholic

Church over Christendom, and thus made religious advance possible.

The second was the rise of Methodism, under the leadership of John and Charles Wesley, which carried Christianity to the common people as it had not been carried before.

The third was the liberal Christian or Unitarian movement, which aimed at the full emancipation of the human soul, and therefore at making Christianity rational, ethical, spiritual, social, and practical.

Of course it is of the greatest importance for it to be understood clearly that this great modern liberal movement, of which Channing was so distinguished a representative, was not and is not limited to America, but is wide-reaching as Christendom, and even wider; that it never has been and is not now confined to churches bearing the Unitarian name, but is found under many names and none; and that it did not originate with Channing or any other one man, but sprang from many sources.

New and Yet Old

The Movement may very justly be called New (a New Religious Reformation), because only within the last century has it come to any considerable fullness of development, or to any wide recognition as having a distinct and important place in the religious world.

But while in this sense it is new, in another it is old. Its beginnings were far back in history.

There were many liberalizing influences at work in Christendom before the Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century. During the Reformation period there were strong men, like Servetus, Laelius and Faustus Socinus and Francis David, who desired to carry the reformation much further in the direction of rational religion and soul liberty than the positions of Luther and Calvin. In the next generation after Luther a distinctly liberal church was established in Hungary, which soon came to be known by the Unitarian name, and which amidst varying fortunes has persisted to our day. There has been no European nation in which there have not appeared individual men, often men of eminence, who in the interest of freedom, reason and progress, have protested against both the theology and the ecclesiastical tyranny of the Roman Catholic Church on the one hand, and the Orthodox Protestant Churches on the other. There has been a large and growing amount of liberal thought in the literature and in the universities of nearly all the nations. For a century or more France and Holland have each had a considerable group of definitely liberal, and really Unitarian, churches, though not bearing the Unitarian name. For nearly a century and a half Great Britain has had an important and steadily growing liberal movement, called Unitarian. And finally (what it is very important to bear in mind), liberal thought

—essentially Unitarian—sometimes recognizing itself as such and sometimes not—has long been penetrating, more and more, all the churches, the Protestant and to some extent the Catholic. Thus we see that the great, important, and rapidly growing, modern liberal (or progressive) religious movement, extends its roots far back into the past, and is larger than any denomination or name.

Its relation to the Unitarian Church is, that here (and in the Universalist Church, which differs little from the Unitarian) we have its most untrammeled and free, its most complete, and its most fully organized, expression. In other words, in the Unitarian Church as seen today in America, in England, and to some extent in Hungary, we seem to have essentially the type toward which practically all forms of liberal Christian thought, however little or however much developed, have been and are moving.

The precise relation of America and of Channing to the general liberal movement is, that in America the movement has had a particularly large and free development—indeed, quite the largest and freest that it has reached anywhere in the world; and in that development Channing holds the most conspicuous, influential and honored place. No single man may justly be called the "founder" or the "father" of the American Unitarian Church. But if we were to seek for the

man to whom these titles (particularly the latter) might with least injustice be given, it would certainly be Channing. Comparing the whole Liberal Religious Movement in America with the Protestant Reformation Movement in Germany, we may well speak of Channing (as we have already done) as its Luther.

Channing's World-Wide Influence

As Channing was an American, naturally the main results of his work, and his greatest influence, are to be looked for in America. And yet his fame has been by no means confined to this country. His writings have gone into nearly or quite all civilized lands, and gone by reason of their recognized worth, their sympathy with freedom, their daring, their spiritual beauty and charm, their breadth of religious vision, their morally uplifting power.

England and the Continent of Europe

As indicating how early his thought attracted wide public attention in England, I may state that some years before his death a collection of his sermons and essays was published in London. This was two years earlier than any similar edition of his writings was given to the people in this country. Both Scotland and Ireland followed with separate editions of their own. Later, at the centennial of his birth (in 1880), a notable shilling edition of nearly his complete works, in one volume, was published in England. To avoid risk in his undertaking, the publisher invited subscriptions beforehand from all persons interested,

promising to go forward and issue the proposed cheap edition, if 10,000 copies were subscribed for. Many said he had set his number unreasonably high; there was no preacher anywhere in the world whose sermons could be sold to the number of 10,000, thirty or forty years after his death. To the surprise of everybody, not only was the required number subscribed for, but the subscriptions almost immediately ran up to 20,000; and if reports circulated at the time are to be credited, nearly 100,000 were finally sold.

It has been asserted repeatedly that no other sermon preached in this country ever commanded so universal attention or was read by so large a proportion of the American people as Channing's Baltimore discourse. And the interest it created here was communicated at once to other lands. Not only was it republished in England, but it was translated immediately into several European languages and circulated widely on the Continent. This was followed later by the translation and circulation of many of his individual sermons and essays, and later still, as has already been said, by collections, and in some cases by nearly complete collections of his works. His thought attracted particular attention in France, Germany, Holland, Sweden, Italy and Hungary. There is also evidence that his writings early had a wide reading among the educated classes in Russia. The unanimity with which the greatest minds of

all lands, sects, parties, and religions have bowed in loving honor to Channing's name, is one of the notable phenomena of the religious world in the past one hundred years.

Let me cite a few American tributes.

Tributes of Eminent Americans

John White Chadwick, the latest American biographer of Channing, assigns to him a particularly high place in connection with social reform. He says: "As Spencer was the poets' poet, so Channing was the reformers' reformer. . . . If, since Channing died, philanthropy has had freer expansion in Boston than in any other city, if there the treatment of the poor, the blind, the insane, the criminal, has excited the most careful thought and attracted the most faithful service, if for educational light and leading Boston has been pre-eminent during this period, may it not be said, while every other valid claim is cheerfully allowed, that no other personal influence has been comparable with that which flowed from Channing's mind and heart?"

William Lloyd Garrison declared that Channing is to be ranked among "the foremost teachers, exemplars, and benefactors of mankind." Andrew D. White, the first president of Cornell University, and later Ambassador to Russia and Germany, calls Channing "one whose life and thought are a blessing to all nations." James T. Fields, writing of the world's debt to Channing, says, "I

always think of him in Wordsworth's phrase as one

'attired
With sudden brightness like a man inspired.' "

All four of our most eminent American poets, Bryant, Longfellow, Whittier, and Lowell, besides not a few others of less note, have embalmed his name in their verse. When Channing died in 1842, Lowell laid a noble poem on his grave, of which these are a few lines:—

"Farewell, good man, good angel now! This hand
Soon, like thine own, shall lose its cunning too;
Soon shall this soul, like thine, bewildered stand,
Then leap to tread the free, unfathomed blue.

"When that day comes, O may this hand grow cold,
Busy, like thine, for Freedom and the Right;
O may this soul, like thine, be ever bold
To face dark Slavery's encroaching blight!"

Longfellow wrote of him:—

"The pages of thy book I read,
And as I closed each one,
My heart responding ever said,
'Servant of God, well done!'

"Well done! thy words are great and bold;
At times they seem to me
Like Luther's in the days of old
Half battles for the free!"

BRONZE STATUE OF WILLIAM ELLERY CHANNING
PUBLIC GARDEN, BOSTON, MASS.

Nor less warm was Whittier's tribute:—

"And thus the common tongue and pen,
Which, world-wide, echo Channing's fame
As one of Heaven's anointed men,
Have sanctified his name.

"In vain shall Rome her portals bar,
And shut from him her saintly prize
Whom in the world's great calendar
All men shall canonize."

English Tributes

The tributes to his worth and greatness that have come from beyond the sea are not less cordial or emphatic. Channing visited England, and went to see Wordsworth. Years afterward the poet would point with emotion to the chair in which he had sat, and say, "There sat Dr. Channing." Coleridge, after his interview with the great American preacher, said: "Dr. Channing is a philosopher in both possible senses of the word. He has the love of wisdom and the wisdom of love." Rev. Sydney Smith, the distinguished English wit and divine, once wrote to a friend: "I preached a good sermon this morning, as good and great as any of Dr. Channing's. In fact, it was Dr. Channing's."

Dean Stanley, on his last visit to this country, was especially desirous to visit Channing's grave. And in an address delivered after his return to England, on "The Historical Aspect of the American Churches," he speaks of Channing in the warmest terms, declaring his to be "one of the

few names of the new world which have acquired not only an American but a European splendor."

The Emperor Don Pedro of Brazil, when he visited the United States, was desirous above almost everything else of visiting the grave of Channing.

The following tribute to Channing comes to us from Prof. Henry Drummund of England: "A book that influenced me was the book of a Unitarian, Dr. Channing, of America. He taught me to believe in God. Of course I believed in God before. My father and mother believed in God, and so I did; but that was credulity. If they had been Mohammedans, I would have believed in Mohammed; or in Confucius had they been Confucians. My belief was no credit to me. After reading Channing, I began to see what it meant really to believe in God. Before, God was an uncomfortable presence in one's life. Channing taught me to see that God is a grateful presence. It is a splendid thing to feel that there is a God like that, and I can never be grateful enough to Channing for the first impressions I received of what God really is."

That gifted and noble preacher of the Church of England, Frederick W. Robertson, writes in his memoirs: "A religious lady found a volume of Dr. Channing's on my table, a few days ago, and was horror-struck. I told her that if she and I ever got to heaven, we should find Dr. Channing

revolving round the central light in an orbit immeasurably nearer than ours, almost invisible to us, and lost in a blaze of glory."

Tributes from Germany and France

Baron Bunsen, the eminent German scholar and statesman, in his great work, "God in History," selects from the Protestant Christian Church of the whole world five men who, in his judgment, stand pre-eminent as representatives of the divine presence in man, or prophets of the religious consciousness. The five are Luther, Calvin, Jacob Boehme, Schleiermacher, and Channing. "Channing," he says, "is an antique hero with a Christian heart. He is a man like a Hellene, a citizen like a Roman, a Christian like an apostle."

In France, Ernest Renan wrote a notable essay on Channing. Jules Simon, President of the French Academy of Moral and Political Sciences, said of Channing: "Time cannot weaken the force of his apostolic teachings, which deserve the attention of all nations." To an important work of four hundred pages on "Channing and his Writings," M. de Rémusat wrote a preface hailing him as a prophet who belonged to no one sect or communion, but to the Universal Church of Christ. Nor is his praise confined to Protestants. The eminent Roman Catholic scholar, M. Lavollée, wrote a book of warm appreciation of Channing, whose literary quality was so high as to cause it to be "crowned" by the Academy.

Joseph Cook and David Swing

Rev. Joseph Cook, during his pyrotechnic career in Boston, some years ago, was fond of saying that Channing's influence was passing away. Prof. David Swing of Chicago answered him, saying: "Joseph Cook declares that Channing's influence is on the decline. If this is true, the explanation must be found in the parallel that the fame of abolitionism has declined because the slaves have become free,—in the parallel that after the woman in the Bible had found her lost piece of silver, she quit sweeping for it. Channingism has perhaps failed, like Alexander, because it has no more worlds to conquer. If Channingism has failed, it is because it has been so absorbed by the American church, and assimilated, that it has lost its definite outline by becoming almost universal."

I am able to give some testimonies regarding Channing's influence in the Orient which seem worthy of notice.

Channing in India

Channing's works early found their way to India, and have always been popular there. No American religious writer, unless it be Emerson, is read there so much or with so great favor. Wherever I have been in India I have found the works of both these writers in the more important libraries. With the leaders of Brahmo Somaj they are held in especially high regard.

Rev. Charles H. A. Dall, who for thirty years was a Unitarian missionary in Calcutta, put in

circulation many hundred copies—indeed, I think not fewer than a thousand copies—of Channing's complete works, besides many copies of his life. In all parts of India I found traces of these fruitful volumes, that sowed the seed of a form of Christianity which India welcomes as she welcomes no other. I remember that after an address which I had delivered at the Brahmo Somaj in Madras, in Southern India, a man came to me from the audience, introduced himself, and told me he had walked a hundred and sixty miles hoping to get from me a copy of Channing. Years before he had obtained from Mr. Dall a volume of Channing's works. This he had read and reread, and loaned and continued to loan, until the book was entirely worn out. And now he was deeply desirous of obtaining another copy. Could I furnish him with one?

Channing in the Khasi Hills

In the Khasi Hills, in the northeast of India, there is a group of some six or eight Unitarian churches. The first Unitarian seed planted there was from a volume of Channing which had been lent by a Brahmo Somaj teacher, who possessed it and prized it very highly, to Mr. Singh, a Khasi young man who was a surveyor in the employ of the Government. This young Khasi surveyor had been educated in a Calvinist Methodist mission, and was very much esteemed and valued by the missionaries as a leader among their young people. But the hard and dark and, as it seemed to him,

unreasonable doctrines of Calvinism, had never satisfied him. Something in his better nature had always revolted against them. When the volume of Channing came into his hands, it seemed to him like a message from heaven. It brought light, it brought joy. Here was a Christianity that commended itself at once to his reason, to his moral nature, to all that was highest and best in him. This is not the time or place to tell the story of the development of that interesting Unitarian movement in the far-away Khasi Hills, from its first beginning to what it is now; but it is inspiring to know that primarily it is the result of seed sown more than half a century after his death by the great and honored American Unitarian leader.

Channing and the Mohammedans of India

Soon after the conversion to Unitarianism of Mr. Singh by the writings of Channing, word came to Dr. Brooke Herford, at that time minister of the Arlington Street (Channing's) Church, Boston, Mass., of the conversion to the Unitarian faith of a Mohammedan barrister of some distinction in Central India, named Akbar Masih. It soon developed that this conversion also was the result of a volume of Channing put in circulation by Mr. Dall. Dr. Herford maintained a correspondence with Mr. Masih for some years, furnishing him small sums of money for printing and other forms of propaganda activity. I had the privilege of visiting him in the city of Allahabad, where I found that while he had organized no

Unitarian churches, yet, as the result of his preaching, writing, private activity, and circulation of Channing's works, he had brought considerable numbers of Mohammedans in that section of India, some of them men of influence, into knowledge of and sympathy with liberal Christian thought. While Trinitarian Christianity had no power whatever to reach Moslems, their minds being absolutely sealed against it on account of its Trinity idea, he found that Unitarian Christianity as taught by Channing had in it much to command their attention and win their respect and favor.

In my own experiences, not only in India, but in Japan and Syria, I found much to confirm the testimony of Mr. Masih. One experience was striking and significant.

The Mohammedans of North Africa and Syria. Remarkable Testimony of Pere Hyacinthe

On returning from one of my visits to India, I traveled through Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, and happened to be in Jerusalem at the time when Père Hyacinthe Loyson, the distinguished reformed Roman Catholic preacher of Paris, who for many years drew such crowds of listeners to Notre Dame Cathedral, was making a somewhat extensive visit in Jerusalem and Palestine. Père Hyacinthe, learning through his wife, with whom I happened to have some acquaintance, that I was in Jerusalem, sent for me for an interview, to tell me of his recent remarkable experiences with the Mohammedans of Morocco, Tripoli, Tunis,

Egypt and Syria, and to send by me a message to the Unitarians of America and England. For two years he had been travelling through the cities of all Northern Africa and Syria, and holding "conferences," as he called them, with the leading educated Mohammedans of those cities, with a view to creating closer and more sympathetic relations between Mohammedans and Christians. The thing that had impressed him everywhere, he declared, was that the only form of Christianity that could get any interested and sympathetic hearing among Mohammedans was Unitarianism, or, as he liked to call it, "the religion of Channing." He was amazed to find that Channing was so well known among educated Mohammedans. Not a few of Channing's writings had been translated into Arabic and widely circulated; and everywhere they had attracted great attention and won favor by their breadth and lofty spirituality. "Channing," he affirmed, "is the one great Christian prophet of the modern world who has a message for Islam,—the one Christian prophet to whom Mohammedans will listen." "Tell the Unitarians of America and of England," said Père Hyacinthe to me over and over with great earnestness, "to send missionaries with Channing's gospel to the Moslems. They will receive a warm welcome, and they can do untold good." Again and again he declared: "My extensive experience shows that the Christianity of

Channing is the one form of religion that can give to the Mohammedan world the spiritual quickening and regeneration which it needs, and which its best minds are dimly reaching out after."

Channing, a World-Teacher

From all these testimonies that have been cited (and multitudes of others little if any less striking might easily be obtained), it seems to be clear that Channing has taken his permanent place, not simply as a great American, not simply as the leader of an advanced Christian movement, however important, in America, but as something larger,—as a world-prophet, as a world-teacher, as an influence for the spiritual liberation and uplift of humanity, that can neither die nor be confined to any one nation, race, or age.

The striking words of Dr. Minot J. Savage seem hardly too strong: "Channing's principles, —his faith in God, his faith in man, his reliance on reason,—are the principles of universal religion, and can never be outgrown. These principles are spreading, as enlightenment spreads; they are growing, as human thought grows; they are permeating the life of the age; it needs no gift of prophecy to see, that, sooner or later, they must dominate the intelligent world."

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THE MINISTRY OF HOPE

BY

LOUIS C. CORNISH

A Baccalaureate Sermon delivered on September 28, 1921
at the Meadville Theological School

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The American Unitarian Association was Founded in 1825 with the Following Expressed Purpose

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*The General Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, passed the following vote at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man."

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

THE MINISTRY OF HOPE

And Jesus said unto him, "Feed my sheep"

Through the mists of centuries we read the closing incident of Jesus' ministry in the Gospel of John, the most imaginative and interpretative of the Gospel narratives. Peter and Thomas and Nathaniel and the sons of Zebedee and two unnamed disciples go fishing on the sea of Tiberius. In the early morning they behold Jesus standing upon the shore. Peter flings himself into the sea and swims, the others follow him in the boat. They find a fire, and fish cooking upon the coals, and there in the open they sit together, silent for a time, and then the Master speaks to Peter. "Lovest thou me more than these?" And Peter answers, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." And Jesus says, "Feed my sheep." Again comes the question and the answer. "Lovest thou me?" "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." And once again, "Simon, lovest thou me?" "Yea, Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." And Jesus said unto him, "Feed my sheep."

The test of discipleship, the test the Master applies to the disciple who is to serve him for a lifetime, the test of reality stronger than the love of friends and all the duties of the day, is given in this command, this challenge, "Feed my sheep."

Take this incident as history, and many through the centuries have done so with a literalism that in essence is true to fact, or take the story as a poetic interpretation of the spirit of the Nazarene; take it in any way you will, but I beg you to ponder it, remember it, never forget it, use it as the very symbol of that ministry for which you have prepared and upon which you are now to enter. The Christ spirit of the ages speaks to you: the Christ spirit, which to-day is transcendently the hope of the world, now that your novitiate ends and your apostle's work begins, challenges you. Lovest thou me? And your answer, Yea, we love thee. Lovest thou me? Yea, we love thee. Lovest thou me? Yea, thou who hast trodden the ages under conquering feet, thou knowest that we love thee. Feed my sheep. Feed my sheep. Feed my sheep.

Can you feed men with hope? **Will** you feed them? Will you love to feed men better than you love all else? Here is the eternal test of discipleship. So will your devotion to the truth be proven. Again and again men will bring you to this holy examination, awful, almost unbearable in its power and quality. So men have tested the worth of the ministry generation after generation. By this final examination they have accredited ministers as of supreme help to humanity, or condemned them as of no real account. There is only this one test alike for priest and for prophet. This is your challenge upon your graduation.

I speak to you with the authority of an ever growing purpose in the history of the race. Understand also that I speak in deep humility. When I look into your faces, and realize who you are, I

would gladly say to you, Reverend fathers in God and fellow-believers, teach me your wisdom. But you have bidden me here to testify. I would you could know with what hesitation I have come. Who am I, indeed, to instruct you or to exhort, you who stand in the white light of your youth and consecration, and you others who have poured into these minds not only the learning of the schools but the full measure of your own devotion. Yet withal, I am bold to testify out of my twenty-six years of active service in the Christian church, twenty-two years of it in the blessed service of our Unitarian Christianity.

I am to speak to you what I may of this stewardship of the mystery of hope. If what I believe is to be of value, perhaps you should know something of my arrival. Briefly, I have traveled the familiar path that leads out from a form of orthodox Christianity, over a long desert stretch where I could see no leading, across what Harriet Martineau describes as the breezy commons of the universe, and gradually there has come to me a deepening apprehension of the divine. I have seen men hope and I have seen hope justified.

You will ask what I mean. I am convinced that history reveals a development, and that this development can be translated into a purpose. Excluding other considerations, other phases of history, take just the religious development of man. Religion first shows itself in those savage beliefs where a gleam of wisdom and of hope is discernible in the night of ignorance. Man becomes aware of an enfolding mystery, potent with influences which he fumbles to understand. Then through countless

centuries and endless stages these beginnings have developed into the three great world faiths which now sway mankind. Differ as they may, these faiths agree in much that is essential. They all sense with reverence the infinite mysteries about us. All teach brotherliness. All sacrifice immediate concerns to distant good. All hold that the soul survives the body. All proclaim a soul development. Plainly they differ, obviously they are of varying value. But in them all is universal truth, the apprehension of the infinite mysteries in which we dwell, our kinship to these mysteries, and our higher destiny beyond the present life. Here is a common heritage of appreciation, a common human perception, of what forever will abide. Further, outside these historic developments of belief are many testimonies. This is especially true to-day. Our literature is full of utterances of pure belief in God and human destiny which can hardly be included in any traditional group. Such utterances testify to the underlying unity of religious experience, and they prophesy a universal apprehension of the divine that in future ages shall become the common faith of all mankind. In religion we deal with persistent universal phenomena.

The greatest interpreter, the clearest exponent of their meaning, is the Nazarene. He is far more than the fulfilment of tribal Messianic expectation, far more than the creedal Christ; he is the spokesman of truths greater than the world has comprehended. He is to-day the interpreter of the essential unity of the race, and of its high destiny, and of a purpose which is no less than the warp and woof of life. He is the symbol of a vast tide of hope and assurance

in God that began yonder millions of years ago and flows forever onward.

Let us consider these phenomena in another way. Here is a kind of life, a Christ-like life, a life of brotherly affiliations and unselfish service, shot through with hope of the hereafter. This sort of life appears on the planet, continues, spreads, is rebuffed, is extinguished, but ever miraculously survives, is ever nailed on the world's calvaries, and yet ever again by the very power of its crucifixion returns in triumph. It is something immeasurably vaster than any definition, vaster than religions. Behold the travail of the ages, an eternal spiritual upward trend, the perpetual witness of a hope which the world itself cannot quench, the fountain of the peace which the world can never give.

This has happened. Call my faith in it, if you will, a sort of transcendentalism. Call it anything you like, but include in it your broadest understanding of history. Read into it the richness of your own experience, that we may feel the force of the questions to which it leads.

What does such a belief mean to the little child whom you will baptize, or begin to instruct? What matter to him, born on some ugly Main Street, this upward trend through aeons of time; of what moment to him the sayings of Jesus and the testimony of Christ-like men?

And whence came the child? From the moment he was conceived, he began a physical development through the lower forms of animal life up to the human being. He is born with the marks of this animal travail on his body, yet he is born capable of thought, of acquiring an encompassing knowl-

edge so vast that it transcends the earth and weighs the stars. He plans, he creates, he is capable of infinite development. A recent writer describes this travail. "Before I could lie on my mother's breast," she writes, "the earth had to be prepared, and the stars had to take their places, a million races had to die, testing the laws of life; and a boy and girl had to be bound for life to watch together for my coming. I was millions of years on the way, and I came through seas of chance, over the fiery mountain of law, by the zig-zag path of human possibility. . . Such creatures of accident are we," the writer continues, "liable to a thousand deaths before we are born. But once we are here we can create our own world. . . . No cataclysm has the force to move me from my path. . . Even life that was so difficult to attain may serve me merely as a wayside inn, if I choose to go on eternally. However I came here it is mine to be!"

What does childhood mean? It means this right to be. As his body has passed through many stages, so before he reaches maturity the child's mind must pass through the stages of man's intellectual history, must traverse great tracts of human experience. He is a barbarian, a tribesman, an iconoclast, a dreamer, until at last maturity is reached. The cycle of life runs swiftly on. He is a man, he labors, he loves, he grows old, he dies.

We witness a third development. As his body and his mind have been in transition, so his spirit also has been in process. Here is the miracle: his spiritual growth alone is capable of endless development. He is to determine the end of it as he himself shall choose. If he wills spiritual growth, noth-

ing can debar him from it. He can become in reality a child of grace and an inheritor of heavenly things. He is heir to all the ages. What is the worth of the life to itself? And we answer, The hope that has sustained it.

Such is the worth of hope to the child, and he has a right to it. To cheat him with cant, with worldly learning, with riches of whatever kind, and leave him ignorant of hope eternal is to rob him of his birthright.

Further, what every man hopes for is of supreme importance not only for himself but for others. Try to imagine an earth inhabited only by the children of eternal hope. Imagine it in all its implications. Would not all the partial things become whole, and the earth at last be full of the knowledge of God as the waters cover the sea? Two great tendencies in human life make for this ultimate consummation: the growing appreciation of our relation to the all enfolding mysteries, and the growing affiliation of men; love to God, and love to men. All the law and the prophets still hang upon these two commandments, and here is our message.

We are confronted with a complexity of institutions, races, beliefs, practices, and among them the different habits of faith. Dare we apply our test to the churches? I freely confess to you that personally I judge all religious teaching by the quality of hope which it brings to individuals. A man who lives without hope is of all men the most to be pitied. I fear greatly for the hopeless life. It is most to be dreaded. And next to it I fear for the life that is arrested in its spiritual development. The lack of hope and the lack of spiritual develop-

ment I dread as the monks of old feared the devil. It matters comparatively little where a man begins in faith. Only let him not deny the leading of the Holy Spirit of truth and he will be led onward and upward through partial intuitions and perceptions from glory to glory. The lesser understanding will give place to the more inclusive, the cloudy vision will grow more clear.

The life of God is too mighty, His dealings with men too manifold, for any one of us to find the only way. Let every man be true to himself, and take the highest he can discover. Let him be content with no arrested development. If he finds comfort and help in definitions which lack appeal to me, it concerns me little. We may both be right in an inclusiveness larger than either of us has fully grasped. What does concern me is that we both shall feed the world. Is there hope in our teachings, his and mine, is there enlargement, is there affirmation and not negation, is there what Carlyle called the everlasting yea? Does our teaching confirm the feeble knee and shelter the smoking flax so that the flame of hope shall burn? This is of supreme importance.

There is real danger that we miss this vocation by preaching abstractions, philosophies, subtle intricacies, and these will not be understood. Paul felt the temptation. There is still discussion about parts of his writings! But it was Paul who said he would rather be understood in the churches than to speak with tongues. And Paul taught of love that hopeth all things. Because of our very intelligence and wide interests I suspect that we free ministers

are in peculiar danger of speaking with tongues. Certainly we shall do well to avoid the peril.

In passing, let me apply this statement to the diversity of theological interests in our fellowship. We hear of theological differences between men equally honest and honored in our ministry. I rejoice that we can abide in a loving spirit with differences of opinion about the heavenly mysteries. So far as I am aware no one wishes to dictate to me; so far as I can discern my own mind, I wish to dictate to no one. What we all desire is that hope be preached. If I preach not hope, than woe is me! If others preach not hope, their effort is vain. So long as we all preach hope, we shall be blessed.

And our hope will depend upon our belief in God. This belief lies in the realm, not of definition, but of apprehension, of appreciation. We depend largely on intuition. The eye does not hear, nor the ear see. Many aspects of life the mind does not fathom. We reason about things largely after we apprehend them, we apprehend far more than we directly know. We know the dangers of these facts. But let us here take only the good from them. We are mystics, daring to believe more than we can measure, more than the heart of man hath conceived, trusting ever in the triumph of hope. With Paul and Jesus we are bond servants of hope. Our whole free movement rightfully takes its place with the mystics. We are aware of infinitely more divinity than we ever can proclaim, or ever define. Definitions of deity have their useful place, but what the world needs, and what we continually need, is the practice of the consciousness of God.

Let me give you my meaning in one familiar lyric expression:

"Ay, now, when my soul all day hath drunken the soul of the oak,
And my heart is at ease from men, and the wearisome sound of the stroke
Of the scythe of time, and the trowel of trade is low.
(My) belief overmasters doubt, and I know that I know,
And my spirit is grown to a lordly great compass within,
(Like) the length and the breadth and the sweep of the marshes of Glynn.
As the marsh-hen secretly builds on the watery sod,
Behold I will build me a nest in the greatness of God:
By so many roots as the marsh-grass sends in the sod
I will heartily lay me ahold on the greatness of God."

Brethren, your task and mine is to build us a church on the greatness of God.

This Church of God is building, it forever exists transcendent, the one holy, universal and catholic church of the spirit. In the name of this Universal Church I exhort and even dare command you: as you believe in God and fear Him, as you discern the divine in men and labor for its triumph, as you would fulfil the high calling of God which you have taken upon yourselves, feed the world with hope eternal.

[No. 297]

A HIGHWAY FOR OUR GOD

BY

CHARLES EDWARDS PARK, D.D.

PUBLISHED FOR FREE DISTRIBUTION
AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION
25 BEACON STREET, BOSTON, MASS.

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A HIGHWAY FOR OUR GOD

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low.—*Isaiah* xl: 4.

The words are a portion of that famous Fortieth Chapter of Isaiah, which, by common consent, has become the chief item in our so-called Advent literature. They remind us that Christmas Day stands for a great and hopeful event in the world's religious interest, and that before we can properly celebrate that event some kind of religious preparation will be necessary. They go on to say just what that preparation must be. It must consist in building a straight level highway, a highway for our God—over which our Lord may enter our life and take up his abode in our hearts and institutions. The inference is perfectly obvious. The country through which our Lord must proceed before he can approach our life is a hard country to traverse. It is cut up with mountains and valleys of human injustice and inequality. There are cold glittering mountain peaks of undeserved human pride and power of undeserved human prosperity and arrogance. There are dark and cruel valleys of undeserved human misery and squalor, of undeserved human poverty and suffering and wretchedness. There are rough places of human doubt and perplexity, of human peril and difficulty. There are crooked places of human craft and error, of human cunning and deceit.

If we want our Lord to come into his own, to enter

our life and reign over us, we must make it possible for him to come by building him a highway that shall be straight and level and broad and open.

Several years ago the President of our country decided to spend his summers in the little town of Cornish, New Hampshire. Accordingly the citizens of Cornish prepared for his coming. They made a special appropriation of town funds, and built a splendid road from the Connecticut River bridge right up to the presidential residence. It would seem as though they must have deliberately taken these verses from Isaiah for their guide in building that road. They cut down the grades, they filled in the hollows, they eliminated the dangerous curves and bends, they surfaced the bed until it was fair and smooth as a city boulevard—a highway for our President. They called it President's Road. It will probably bear that name forever. There is a practical object lesson to help us understand what Isaiah would have us do in preparation for the coming of our Lord. The social and spiritual topography of our life is not fit for him to travel over. We must cut down these social abuses and inequalities. We must rectify these moral obliquities. We must smooth out these spiritual doubts and unfaiths. Then he can come and dwell among us and reign over us in peace and truth and tranquil majesty.

So much for Isaiah. But is it possible for us to put his recommendation into effect? At first we confidently answer *yes*. It is not only possible, it is actually being done. We are all hard at work building that King's Highway. And each recurrent Christmas season finds it a little nearer its completion. I mean by that, that we are learning to insist

that Christmas must be and shall be a day of gladness and hope and brotherly love not only for ourselves and our immediate friends, but for everybody. And we are learning to exercise an increasing solicitude in behalf of others, so that everybody will have occasion to be glad that there is such a day as Christmas in our calendar. We are beginning to realize that Christmas cannot belong exclusively to the more favored, more fortunate classes of our society, but that it belongs to everybody; and that it will be incomplete for us unless we can help it to reach way out and touch the forgotten lives in our society, the obscure ones and the neglected ones; the milkman whose matutinal visits are so timed that we never see him face to face; the elevator girl whom we so easily take for granted that she becomes in our eyes almost a part of the machinery she operates; the telephone operator who is required by rule of the company to suppress every personal emotion and reaction and to be for us what Virgil called *vox et praeterea nihil*—a voice and nothing else. Christmas is teaching us to ferret out and discover afresh these little fugitive, forgotten, human contacts and relationships with which our life is filled—and is reminding us that these obscure figures in our social order—even though their function be more than three quarters purely mechanical so far as we are concerned, are nevertheless human creatures like ourselves, with human hearts and emotions, with joys and sorrows and hopes and disappointments, and that there is a plan in the great heart of Christ for them, and that the season of Christ's birth has a value and a meaning for them as well as for us.

We are beginning to realize, with a certain feel-

ing of discomfort, that for a great many of us Christmas has come to be a day almost to dread—or if not to dread at least to look forward to with a sort of patient dismay. It may be all plain sailing for us, who are so situated that we can take time by the forelock and can plan out our Christmas preparation in such ways that we come through it all serenely and comfortably. But think of hundreds and thousands of others in our busy social system, and of how Christmas must affect them—think of the chauffeur who guides you through the traffic, of the corner policeman and his Herculean labors, of the shop-girl who waits on you, of the delivery wagons which bring your purchases to your door, of the postal clerks and express agents ready to drop in their tracks, of the letter-carrier staggering all day long under his burden—think of these and a thousand others, and how Christmas affects them, and you cannot deny the truth of that statement, that this Christmas season has come to be a time which great numbers of our people look forward to with a kind of happy dread. The spiritual landscape of these Advent days is what the surveyor would call a "pretty difficult piece of country." It is cut up into mountains and valleys—mountains of careless laughter and prosperous lightheartedness, and valleys of utter weariness and humiliation, dark ravines of wistfulness and the sense of human neglect. And as we traverse this difficult landscape, Isaiah's words come to mind with a peculiar aptness—every valley shall be exalted and every mountain and hill made low. That is a timely prophecy.

But now, when we get a little further into these speculations we find ourselves beset by difficulties

and misgivings. Isaiah's proposition is that the Lord cannot come into our lives to establish his blessed reign, until we have prepared for his coming by doing away with all the inequalities of life and reducing things to a level. Put into plain words, that proposition means for us that Christianity is impossible to our life so long as our life contains these legalized ups and downs—so long as some of us are strong and rich and some are weak and poor —so long as some of us are prosperous and happy and some of us are disappointed and wretched. Christianity, as a condition fulfilled, will have to wait until these inequalities in earthly fortune and status are done away and all earthly fortune reduced to a common level. And the force of Isaiah's words consists in his implied injunction laid upon our hearts to hurry up and do away with our inequalities so that Christianity may forthwith become possible. Here we stumble against our difficulty. Must we consent to that proposition? Some people say that we must. These people, if they condescend to give God any place at all in their thought and arguments, tell us that God is absolutely impartial: that his love and care make no discriminations; that he has created all his children with an equal dependence upon his divine support, with an equal claim to his favor, with an equal right to his blessings of life and happiness: and therefore that if we want our earthly laws and institutions to resemble and to reproduce God's divine truth and God's eternal institutions, then the first thing to do is to reform these factitious conventions of ours which permit one man to enjoy an undeserved success and oblige another man to suffer an unmerited hardship.

Reduce all human estates to a level. Do away with wealth and poverty alike. Make human success and human failure equally impossible. Exalt the profession of the brotherhood of man to the point of actual practice. What earthly father will discriminate between his children, and make one happier than another, or give more to one than to another? We are all children of a common Father in Heaven. And his Divine Fatherhood cannot become the joyous, radiant fact in our earthly living that it ought to be and might be until we have made the preparation for it by treating each other as brothers and sisters and all living upon the one unvarying level of human equality.

This is the argument put forth by hundreds of devoted souls whose single aim is to lessen the sum total of human sorrow and to increase the sum total of human happiness and contentment. We cannot in justice withhold our cordial acknowledgment of the purity and nobility of that motive. Whatever we may think of the practical wisdom of such people, we are bound to honor their underlying desires. Having made that frank acknowledgment, however, we are bound to affirm that their program of human communism, and human equality, fills us with a sort of wrath. It represents such a mixture of sense and nonsense that we feel as though they were trying to put through the nonsense by making it an integral part of a program which we agree is in other ways sound and sensible. There is an aspect—a spiritual aspect—in which the theory of human equality is seen to be sound and good and true. There is another aspect—the practical aspect—in which it appears nothing but puerile and false. To confuse

those two aspects is simply to create a confusion of thought and to delay the very end which we all want to attain. When a man declares that all human beings are equal—that they are of equal value to the practical purposes of society—that one is just as good, just as useful, just as valuable to the practical ends of our living together as another—he says something that offends us philosophically. To say that is to deny human personality. And human personality is a fact that cannot be denied. No two men are alike, and no two men are gifted with powers equally valuable to Society. All the arguments in the world will not alter that rudimentary fact. You cannot put Jesus of Nazareth and Judas Iscariot in the same category.

Moreover, when a man says that because all men are of equal worth to Society—therefore all ought to receive equal shares, equal allotments of the rewards and safeguards that Society distributes, he is saying a thing that offends us morally. It would be absolutely immoral for Society to reward all its members alike. Not only would it remove that incentive which prompts a gifted man to put forth his great powers in the service of Society because he knows that he can thereby earn a correspondingly great reward, but it teaches the human heart to divorce cause and result. And the closer the connection of cause and result is seen to be, the plainer and more obvious becomes the operation of the moral law. The way the moral law operates is by teaching us that certain results will follow certain causes—that if we live and work in a certain way, a corresponding result will follow. Now if we are to assure unto all men a fixed result regardless of

how they live and how they labor, we shall entirely balk the moral process. If the gifted, faithful man who lives straight and works hard, and the lustful indolent man who lives in very shady ways and does no work at all, are both to receive at Society's hands the same reward—an equal allotment of social wealth and safeguard, then we may have a Society in which hunger and cold are unknown so long as social wealth lasts, but we will also have a Society that is not only practically bankrupt because it will be unable to maintain its social wealth, but that is also morally bankrupt, because there is no distinction made between one kind of life and another, and people are speedily taught to believe that one is as good as another.

These then are the objections that come to our minds against Isaiah's proposition, when that proposition is transformed into a practical program for the reconstruction of Society. It is evident to us all that so long as practical differences exist between human personalities, there must be corresponding differences in the rewards which Society allots to persons. Society is under a practical necessity to reserve its highest and richest rewards for the able and the willing man, and to assign its humblest and poorest rewards to the incompetent unwilling man. And in so far as those necessary differences in reward constitute the inequalities of life, all we can say is that those inequalities are unavoidable. We cannot discover any practically safe way to do away with them. If his willingness and ability enables one man to dwell upon a mountain, and if his unwillingness and incompetence dooms another to exist in a gloomy valley, how are we to help it? We can-

not safely make low those mountains and hills—we cannot safely exalt those valleys—for to do so would be to reduce our life to the deadly monotone of mediocrity and to inaugurate the fatal cult of incompetence which is not nearer but infinitely farther from the Christian ideal.

Having guarded these points, we are free to give the matter a little wider thought, and to see that there is a rather sublime sense in which Isaiah's words are true, and that the reign of Christ in our world cannot be inaugurated until the inequalities of life are done away. When Samuel went down to Bethlehem with his horn of oil to pick out and anoint a King of Israel, he was led to the house of a man named Jesse who had eight sons. The Spirit of God had warned Samuel that he would find his embryo King among those eight sons. He accordingly examined the young men beginning with the eldest, and going along to the next until seven of the eight had passed before him. Still no King was forthcoming. In some dismay Samuel turned to his host and asked, are these all the sons you have? And Jesse replied dubiously, No, there is still one more, but he is only a boy and he is in the fields tending the sheep. Howbeit, he was sent for—and when he came and stood before the august stranger, so young and slight and ruddy and boyish, the spirit whispered to Samuel—"Samuel, be not surprised that I have chosen this boy to be my anointed. Remember that I judge in a slightly different way from what you judge. You look upon the outward bearing and presence, but I look into the heart, and judge by what I find there." So David the stripling was anointed King of Israel.

The judgments of God are slightly different from the judgments of man or Society. Man is bound to judge by practical outward values. God judges by inward character, by heart and desire, by purity of motive and faithfulness of effort. Man is bound to reward practical usefulness and value. God can afford to ignore practical values. We are just Calvinists enough to believe that in the realm of God's sovereignty, practical values are a drug on the market. God's state is Kingly. He doth not need man's work or man's gifts. God can afford to ignore practical values and assign his rewards to the purities of self-devotion, to the fidelities of effort, to the loyalties of purpose and motive which he and he only can read in the secret hearts and characters of his Children. Just what does that mean? It means that while we may never hope to reach equality in practical value, there is an equality in character, in purity of motive, in loyalty of purpose and effort which every one of us can reach. It means that while few of us can hope to earn the high rewards of practical usefulness, there is a high reward in God's judgment, in God's paternal pride and love, which every one of us can earn and possess.

There is a subtle difference between being valuable and being indispensable. We speak of the Unity of God, the Unity of his being and purpose. We mean by that a system of life and growth in which all are included, and in which every one has his proper place and task. Very few of us can boast that we are valuable to the Unity of God. But every one of us can claim the birthright of being indispensable to that Unity of God—simply because the Unity is not complete until all are included and

all are in place. That button on the cushion of your automobile is not as valuable as the engine of your automobile. But it is just as indispensable to the perfect Unity of your automobile as the engine. Without it your automobile is incomplete. There are infinite degrees in value, so much so that there is no hope of finding equality in value. But there are no degrees in indispensability. We are either indispensable or not, according as we give ourselves to God in hope and purpose and motive and effort, however humble that effort may be. And having done that, the humblest one of us stands on a perfect equality with our Platos and our Shaksperes, in God's love and pride.

One of the profoundest teachings that ever came from the lips of Christ is that God is forever seeking to perfect his own unity, forever seeking to draw unto himself that last, humblest, most sinful, most wayward child who is nevertheless indispensable to his Unity. The Shepherd counts over his sheep as they enter the fold. There are only 99. What does the Shepherd do? The night is falling. Here are ninety and nine sheep—all the good ones, all the valuable ones. Does he let it go at that? No—he leaveth the ninety and nine and goeth out into the wilderness to seek and to save that which was lost.

And none of the ransomed ever knew
  How deep were the waters crossed—
How dark was the night that the Lord went through,
  Ere he found that sheep that was lost.

Indispensable to the Unity of God—Yes. More joy in heaven over that one sheep than over the ninety and nine that went not astray.

It seems to me it is just in these thoughts that

we get the burden of Isaiah's great message for us. God is forever seeking to perfect his Unity of being. That unity is incomplete until every one of us is included in God's hope and purpose, for every one of us is indispensable. Once we are included in that unity of hope and purpose, we stand upon a perfect equality with all the rest in God's love and pride. Therefore these inequalities that exist in our life, these cold mountains and dark valleys—they have at best a merely practical meaning, a purely factitious reality. In the allotment of God's love and pride there are no degrees, no inequalities. To insist upon them is to hinder and obstruct the completeness of the divine unity. Learn to look upon your fellowmen as God looks upon them—all alike indispensable in their several estates and degrees, all alike necessary, and sought after, and beloved and wanted in that great Father heart. Cleanse your mind of this thought of inequalities. Let the spirit of this season help you to make low every mountain and hill of earthly pride, and to exalt every valley of contempt and humiliation, and teach you to stand with your fellowmen upon the level ground of a common dependence upon Almighty God, a common inclusion within his all-embracing Unity, of a common possession of his need of you, and of his love and pride in you. For it is only so that our God and his Christ can enter our life, and make our boasted Brotherhood of Man a reality, and turn the Kingdoms of this world into the Kingdom of our God and his Christ forevermore.

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[No. 298]

Spiritual Nerve and Circumstances: A Sermon

BY

JULIAN C. JAYNES

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SPIRITUAL NERVE AND CIRCUMSTANCES: A SERMON

"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."—Psalm xxiii.

The power of the human soul to remain calm and unafraid amid all the shifting circumstances of the environing world! The human spirit possesses just that power,—the power to preserve its own health, the power to hold itself steady and true to the normal standard, the power, not to dictate or control circumstances, but to guard itself from being overwhelmed and destroyed by circumstances.

The *physical* processes of the body are largely automatic. You do not have to *practice* digestion. You do not have to adjust your temperature or think about your arterial system. It takes care of itself. Nature wound you up like a clock, locked the door and threw away the key, so that you might not meddle with the machinery.

But the spiritual system is not automatic. It is not controlled by a nerve and a muscle, but by a conscious thought. You have to *practice* serenity. You have to *think* about courage. You have to brace yourself with stout resolve to withstand "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." And that is the very glory of spiritual constancy. The very fact that it is not automatic, that it is a condition of your own choice and your own cre-

ation—it is that fact that lifts it out of the category of mere instinctive action and distinguishes it with moral significance.

What makes a moral being? Is it correctness? Is it mechanical obedience to law? Is it the servile following of a straight line as the iron wheel runs in the prepared groove? Then the stars are moral, and the snowflake is moral, and the withered leaf drifting down the street before the gusty wind. It is the power to *choose* that makes a moral being. Here I stand at the junction of two roads—stand with open eyes and thinking mind. One road leads toward sin and the other leads toward righteousness. There is no power in heaven or earth that can prevent me from choosing the road I desire. That is my inalienable right. And it is that freedom of choice that constitutes one of the essential factors of moral action.

Likewise the power of fortifying the soul against the invasion of circumstances is one of the great spiritual distinctions of man because it is a matter of choice—because he can say to himself: "I will not be a coward. I will not surrender. I will not be the puppet of things and outward conditions." And straightway the soul falls into order, and fear dies, and courage stands at the gate, straight and calm as a sentinel. Is that possible? Not only possible, but absolutely certain. Every man is potentially a spiritual giant. He never knows what reserve he has until he takes command. When Roderick Dhu blew a blast upon his horn, the heathered moors, so

and suddenly sprang up into an army of

needs but the bugle call of the

will, it needs but the staccato order to "fall in," and suddenly the dormant powers of the soul rise up to defend its peace.

But the timid plead "temperament." They say that this spiritual equilibrium is a matter of inheritance. One man gives a brave, smooth front to life's vicissitudes, because he is born that way. Another is but a jelly-fish on the wave-beaten shore, because he was intended to be only a human jelly-fish. That is a pusillanimous confession to make. And it is not true. It may be that "one star differeth from another star in glory," but *every* star is a star, born in the same cosmic vortex and created out of the same stellar ingredients. We sometimes speak of environment and heredity as if they were the equivalents of the old Greek Destiny that even pulled the strings that actuated the hand of the Olympian gods, but there is no destiny except what a man creates for himself. A man's fate does not reside in Olympus, where Zeus hands down to him weal or woe, light or darkness. It is more intimate than that and far more personal. His fate is the decision of his own will. It is for him to say whether he shall conquer the world or the world shall conquer him. And heredity—it is not some despotic, irresistible power that picks a man up and flings him into heaven or pitches him into hell. It is simply one form of environment,—an environment of temperament, a spiritual companionship of disposition, of desires and hungers; a companionship of tendencies toward cowardice or courage, toward evil or good; and a man is expected to meet them just as he would meet any other circumstance—with the

commanding will. If they are good, he is asked to follow their leading. If they are bad, he is asked to subdue them and make them follow him. Adverse circumstances are only the whetstones of character. Our timid man with his temperament has in him all the possibilities of a hero, if he only thought so, if he only could make up his mind to be one; but he will never do either so long as he drugs his conscience and softens his will by laying the responsibility of his weakness upon the graves of his dead ancestors.

Life presents itself to every man in a great variety of aspects. It is like the weather. You can never tell what it is going to be. Sometimes it is a June day with the perfume of roses, and sometimes it is as hard and bitter as an icy blast from the North. One day the path is smooth as a marble floor, and another day it is choked with thickets of brier and thorn. That is what every soul encounters all along the journey of life. It is what we call the circumstances of time—the capricious, ever-changing climate of the spirit.

What are we going to do about it? We cannot regulate the conditions. That would mean regulating the solar system and a billion and a half human beings to suit our daily desire. What is better, then, than to face squarely into the current of events, be they warm or cold, bitter or sweet, and carry our own climate with us?—that is to say, to have the spirit within us so regulated, so safely adjusted, that it shall not be thrown out of gear or disordered by the heat or cold of daily experience?

The important thing in life is not *what comes* to

us, but the attitude of mind in which we receive what comes. If every trouble sinks straight to the heart of personality, if every wind that blows shakes our house to its foundations, then indeed we have lost our independence and are slaves to every caprice of fortune. But if we can meet life as the oasis meets the desert with its barrier of palms and its fountain of living water at the centre, if we can calmly and defiantly say to the vexations of the world, "Thus far shalt thou come and no farther," we are free sons of God and possess the abundant life. It is this—this firm determination not to be frightened, this quiet resolve not to be disturbed or dethroned—that arms us against circumstances and protects our moral dignity.

I

Temptation comes and lays its allurements at our feet. That is an attention which every man receives from the surrounding world. It tries to poison the sources of life. It offers an attractive programme and promises great rewards. It strives to unsettle his constancy and weaken his loyalty to the ideal. It is circumstances in the dress coat of expediency and weaving the mask of plausibility. It is the supreme test of character. No man need be ashamed of having that test applied. No man need be ashamed of a visit from temptation. It proves that he is worth undoing. It is a compliment which the devil pays to his virtues. But when temptation comes, what then? In my boyhood I was told to flee temptation. When I saw it approaching, I was to run as fast as I could in the opposite direction.

That is one way. But it is the coward's way. It is the way of the man who is afraid, the man who cannot trust himself on the battle-line. To run away from one temptation is to run into another one—there are so many of them. And so the virtuous soul is always on the run, and enjoys no rest or peace. There is a better way, and that is the way of walking straight through temptation. It is to have such a firm grip on principles, such confidence in the integrity of the spirit, such independence and pride of soul, that you have lost all fear and pass through temptation with contemptuous ease. In John Bunyan's immortal allegory the Pilgrim is seen approaching a narrow way where two lions are roaring and plunging in ferocious rage. His first impulse is to run away, and then the voice of the spirit reassures him, and, plucking up courage, he goes forward, only to discover at the critical moment that the lions are chained—and he passes between them unharmed. That is the parable for the tempted man. The best protection against temptation is not the magical seven-league boots, but a spiritual composure that fits like an armor over the soul.

II

The world, moreover, sends its vexations and disappointments, its successes and victories. Living is like traveling. You have to change cars and put up at a variety of hotels. You encounter all sorts of officials, and your experiences run all the way from glory to humiliation. One day is a day of inspiration, and another is full of trial and exasperation.

He is a good traveler who takes things as they

come and preserves his serenity whole. That is the way of life. You have your defeats and you have your victories. Both are tests of your moral poise. They represent the freezing and the boiling points of outward conditions. It is difficult to say which is the more disconcerting to the undisciplined soul. Some characters die at 32° and others perish long before they reach 212°. Some people fly to pieces, like a Prince Rupert drop, when the tip of their superficial life happens to be broken off. Some people, on the other hand, lose their balance and fall from their thrones as soon as prosperity has crowned their brows. The chill of adversity or the warmth of good-fortune has got inside and deranged the normal temperature of the spirit. How little the good traveler is affected by these things! He is the business man, or the professional man. He is the preacher, or the teacher, or the carpenter at the bench. Or he bakes bread and serves at the table. Each is traveling around his own world, and that world is full of all sorts of moral weather. He has prepared himself for the worst and the best. He is not of any superior order of being. He is superior only in this respect, that he is determined not to lose his life by trying too anxiously to find it. He will be king in his own private kingdom, and no external surprise of circumstances good or ill shall turn his head or disrupt his peace. And he wins—wins the consciousness of supreme manhood, wins the prize of life, which is *more* life. He is victor though his sword be broken at the hilt and his hands be tied behind his back. And he is no more a victor though his outstretched palms be filled with

treasure and a multitude of his fellow-men be prostrate at his feet.

III

Then life applies another group of tests. It would seem as if it were a kind of inquisition trying to make a man's soul cry out and confess to fear and cowardice. It flings him on the rack and distorts him with pain. It mixes his cup with the toxin of old age, and his hair whitens and his hand trembles. It draws aside a curtain and in the dim light he sees the dead face of his best friend. Now surrender, curse God, and die! No, not if he is the brave, sane man.

These wounds run deep but they must not stab to the core of character. They are part of the programme, and, tragic though they be, they cannot be so tragic as a lost trust in God and a soul dead with cynicism. They are inevitable. If a man lives long enough he must go on the rack of pain, he must taste the cup of infirmity, he must walk in the way of the mourner. But the valiant pilgrim meets these experiences, not with the stoic's unconcern, but with a heart, chastened and saddened it may be, yet wondrously warm with beautiful memories, great hopes, and the unruffled assurance that neither life nor death, nor things present nor things to come, can ever separate him from the eternal goodness at the centre of things. "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Sometimes that confident note sounds like the cry of one who believed he was the special favor-

ite of Heaven and carried the signet ring of Omnipotence. But it is not that. It is simply the voice of the good traveler, who, in a far-away time, wandered among the hills and vales of Palestine, met temptation, trouble, and pain, and yet felt the brooding good-will of the Great Shepherd, believed in His universe and was not afraid.

Let us go back to the world with that triumphant psalm singing in our hearts. There will be disappointment, suffering, and loss. There will be joy, success, and victory. There will be temptations, seeking the heart of youth, knocking at the doors of mid-life, besetting even old age in the twilight hours. We will front them all with whole hearts. We will not be demoralized by victory. We will not be ruined by defeat. We will go our way among all these things, keeping our moral dignity, calm amid the storm, undismayed in the shadow of the night. To confess even to ourselves that we are creatures of circumstance is the unconditional surrender of the stronghold of the spirit.

We will not confess that, and we will not surrender.

> Out of the night that covers me,
> Black as the pit from pole to pole,
> I thank whatever gods may be
> For my unconquerable soul.
>
> In the fell clutch of circumstance
> I have not winced nor cried aloud.
> Under the bludgeonings of chance
> My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

That is the poet Henley throwing down the gauntlet to the universe. With clenched fist, and blood streaming from his bruised head, he stands alone and challenges Fate to do its worst. "Come on," he cries, "you black messengers of the pit, strike again crush me where I stand, beat to the dust my upheld defences; but I will fight on to the last breath, and defy you with an unconquered spirit." That is a stirring picture,—the picture of a magnificent fight, a titanic man blindly, brutely, vindictively squared against the onrushing charge of wrathful circumstance. It is the wounded lion at bay, roaring defiance as he claws the lance that has pierced his breast. It is thrilling, but it is pagan: it is inspiring, but it is gladiatorial. It means nothing but a raw, fierce struggle on the sands of the world's arena.

Another poet shall come. He shall likewise celebrate the unflinching courage of man, he shall also image the bludgeoning of circumstance and the bleeding, unbowed head; but over and above it all, and through it all, shall run the commanding strain of the vast friendliness of the universe, the redeem-

ing and chastening power of adversity, and a call to that fearlessness of spirit, which is higher than *spiritual obstinacy*, even that sanity of soul and composure of mind which are born of a consciousness of the close-approaching and overbrooding presence of God.

The first notes of that song were struck ages ago. Listen once more: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. . . . Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever."

Our Heavenly Father, it matters not how strait the gate, how charged with punishments the scroll. We thank Thee that Thou hast given us power to overcome and strength to conquer. Teach us to use these gifts of the spirit with that dignity and courage that becomes those born of the Spirit. Amen.

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WHY ARE UNITARIANS DISCIPLES OF JESUS?

BY

CLAYTON R. BOWEN

An Address Given at the Independent Congregational Church, Meadville, Pa., January 22, 1922, Under the Auspices of the Brotherhood for Unitarian Missions.

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The American Unitarian Association was Founded in 1825 with the Following Expressed Purpose

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*The General Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, passed the following vote at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man."

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WHY ARE UNITARIANS DISCIPLES OF JESUS?

The Brotherhood for Unitarian Missions has asked me to answer the question why Unitarians are disciples of Jesus. By this question, as I gather, two things are meant: first, why do we follow *him* rather than the teaching of the later creed-makers, and second, why do we follow him at all. Both these aspects of the question I shall endeavor to keep in mind as I attempt the reply. I shall try to speak very freely, frankly and plainly; unless I am as clear as I know how to be, it is not worth while to deal with the question at all. While indicating as precisely as possible the points at which the doctrines of other systems of Christian faith diverge from ours, I trust that I shall be guided by the Scripture rule—to speak the truth, but to speak it in love.

This address is one of a series bearing the general caption: What Does it Mean to Be a Unitarian? I never hear that question without being reminded of the answer given by the bluff old Englishman, "It means one God, and twenty shillings in the pound!" It means, that is, something very definite in faith and something very definite in life. The present occasion is meant to give at once, very positively, the answer: it means to be a follower of Jesus. We Unitarians make a great point of that. Our statements of faith are very brief, but we always find space to confess to the leadership of

Jesus. The covenants on which our churches unite are very simple, but they generally assert that we come together in his spirit, to work for the realization of his ideals. Unitarians are *Christians,* in the truest and most literal sense. I know, as you do, that there are people who sometimes deny us the Christian name, on the ground that their opinions differ from ours, and they have defined Christianity as equivalent to their opinions. This is a kind of criticism that may well be ignored, since it rests on lack of knowledge. Romanists have sometimes denied that Protestants are Christians, and different Protestant sects have refused the name to one another. Above all such childish "calling of names" rises clear and high a sovereign voice that comes down the ages, "Ye are my disciples if—ye have love one to another." And that test, of course, always rules out the critics rather than those criticised.

When the great Unitarian preacher and writer Edward Everett Hale was once taken to task for daring to join in a communion service with a so-called "orthodox" congregation, his sufficient reply was, "I had my invitation 1900 years ago." We received our Christian name 1900 years ago, and no one can take it from us. Do you know how often the word "Christian" occurs in the New Testament? Just three times: twice in the Acts of the Apostles, once in First Peter, both late writings. No one of these three passages defines the name, least of all in doctrinal terms. But the first of them (Acts 11: 26) tells when and where and to whom it was first applied. *"The disciples* were called Christians first in Antioch." These disciples who first get this famous name are not Jews, but Gentile followers of

Jesus, in the great city of Antioch in Syria, and the time is about the year 45 A. D. It is long before Christian doctrine has been formulated; nearly two hundred years before the word "Trinity" or the doctrine it denotes was heard in the church. The name was given to people in Antioch simply because they were disciples or followers of Jesus. That includes us all. Centuries later, church councils introduced limitations and exclusions, but our church at least goes back to the original usage of the apostolic church in the earliest years after Jesus' death. It has never occurred to us to deny the Christian name to any disciples or followers of Jesus, however much their doctrines might differ from ours. The name did not arise in any connection with doctrine and no such connection should be put into it.

And what is true with regard to the Christian name is true, with us Unitarians, in regard to many another point. We stand, in numerous matters, for the original New Testament attitude or usage, while other churches find their basis in the creeds and rules of later centuries. We try, as Jesus' disciples, to get back to his way of thinking and acting, to discover his own personal religion as the guide and help for our own. We can state all our theology in the words of the New Testament, which is something no other church in the community can do. The statements in the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed or the Thirty-nine Articles or the Westminster Confession or any of the other formulas of the faith of these churches may be perfectly true, but they are statements not made in the New Testament, couched in language which is foreign to Jesus and the apostles.

"The Lord our God is One, and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart"; that is a sufficient statement of Unitarian theology. Jesus said it, but no Trinitarian church could use it. "To us there is one God the Father"; that is our Unitarian profession. Paul said it, but no church in town could use it as a creed except ours. Instead of being the newest, most advanced, most radical, of Christians, as we are often described, in many ways we are primitive believers, who go back, as no others do, to the original words of the faith. Christianity has been defined as *the imitation of Christ,* and I like to think of it in that way; as an imitation of him, not only in our living, but in our faith, our religion, as well. If we could believe just as he believed, would we not be of the true faith, certainly orthodox? If we had his creed, a creed that he and we could say together as the expression of our profoundest faith, then should we be Christian believers indeed. Well, I have never seen a creed I can imagine him signing or saying. I can imagine him praying his own prayer with us, "Our Father who art in heaven," but somehow I can't hear him getting very far in a statement like the Apostles' Creed. "I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth (yes, surely!), and in *myself* his only son . . . ." No, I think he would have to stop there and would find some other expression for his faith. After all, those opening words of his prayer express pretty well his theology —"Our Father who art in heaven"—they express also pretty well the heart of Unitarian theology. "Our Father who art in heaven." We all pray it often; this phrase means *the whole of God,* accord-

ing to Unitarianism, as it assuredly did for Jesus. According to Trinitarianism, it means one-third of God; God includes also a Son who is in heaven and a Spirit who is in heaven. According to Trinitarianism, the Master who was teaching his disciples to say after him this prayer was himself a second person in the same God in which "Our Father," to whom the prayer was addressed, was the first, and a Spirit, less often mentioned, the third. Do you address God, the whole God, when you say the Lord's Prayer to our Father, or do you address one-third of God, one of his three equal persons? That is the simple question that divides Unitarian theology from Trinitarian. The whole case is there.

We go back, I say, to the mind of Christ, and to his expression. We say "son of God," as he did; others say "God the Son," as he never did, nor any writer in the New Testament. We say "spirit of God," as he did; others say "God the Spirit," as he never did, nor any New Testament writer. We say "Our God is One," as he did, as the New Testament generally does. Others say "Our God is a Trinity," as he never did, nor any apostle, nor any New Testament writer, nor any Christian, so far as we know, of the first two centuries of Christianity. So far as I have been able to discover, the earliest occurrence of the word "trinity" (or its equivalent) as applied to God, is in the first quarter of the third century, nearly two hundred years after Jesus' time, in a writing of an African lawyer named Tertullian, a heretic who had already been excommunicated from the orthodox church. It was another century before the orthodox church adopted the heretic's word.

We say simply, as Paul did, "To us there is one God, the Father." We need no other person in the God we worship, we desire no other, we understand no other. We worship the God Jesus worshipped, pray to the Father to whom he prayed. We cannot desert *him* to go with the theologians who say, "To us there is also God the Son and God the Holy Ghost."

Jesus spent his life telling men about God, his heavenly Father. If God were a three-personed being, and Jesus himself one of those three persons, he surely would clearly have so taught. This is an idea so new, so strange, so utterly unlike anything the people to whom Jesus spoke had ever conceived, that he would have needed to make it very explicit, very clear, with much repetition. As a matter of fact, not only is the word "Trinity" never found on his lips, nor any hint that God is three-personal, or anything save the one divine person, the Father, of whom he constantly speaks, but the Trinitarian idea can by no possibility be introduced into his sayings. In no utterance of his in which the word God appears can this word be made by any exegesis to mean "the Son" or "the Holy Ghost" or "the Three-in-one" or anything save the unipersonal Father. Try to make these substitutions and you will see the monstrous incongruity. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see the Father, Son and Holy Ghost." "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of the Blessed Trinity." "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto the three Persons in one God the things that are theirs." No, it will not do. This is not the thought or the language of him who said,

"Why callest thou me good? None is good save one, that is God."

To be sure, there are a few sayings attributed to Jesus that after the invention of the doctrine of the Trinity were explained in this Trinitarian sense. For example there is the famous saying in Matthew 28:19, in which, as we read it in our English Bibles, Jesus is represented as appearing to his disciples some time after his death and bidding them, "Go ye therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." Though the living Jesus never alluded to the Trinity, it is said, yet he did come back after death to make this one isolated reference to it. To this it may be replied in the first place that as a distinguished scholar of the English church has shown (and many scholars of various churches agree) the original reading here was quite certainly "baptizing them in my name," the reading with the three names being a later alteration, to conform to later thought and practice. As a matter of fact, as the New Testament and the other oldest Christian writings make clear, the primitive church did baptize in the name of Jesus alone, never until much later in the three names. But even taking the words as they stand, they do not in the least indicate that Jesus ever had the Trinity in mind. If he never hinted at such an idea while living, we need not be much concerned if he is once represented as using this language after his death. It is only in this one gospel; no other gospel, no other passage in the New Testament, has anything like it. I do not know how you feel; for myself I am sure that these sayings put into Jesus' mouth, after his death, represent

not what the real Jesus thought and said, but ideas which came to his followers in the time of reflection when he was gone. But suppose these were really words of Jesus; even so, there is no touch of Trinitarianism in them. They do not add the statement which alone makes Trinitarianism, "these three are persons of one God." "Baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" means simply: into the name of God, of Jesus the Master, of God's spirit. If an officer should say, "I arrest you in the name of the President, of the Governor of this state and of the sheriff of this county," we should not add, "These three are one being." If the devout Romanist invokes the name of God, of the holy Virgin and of St. Joseph, he is not meaning that they are one being. If a man were welcomed to American citizenship in the name of Washington and of Jefferson and of Lincoln, no one would suppose these three Presidents to form a human trinity. So baptism in the name of the Christian's God the Father, in the name of Jesus God's Son and the Christian's Master, and in the name of God's spirit which dwells in the Christian's heart, does not imply, or hint, that God is made of three persons. God is here, as always, the Father only.

In the "Gospel according to John," which the early church fathers and modern scholars agree in regarding as a spiritual interpretation of the Christian message rather than a historical account of what Jesus actually said and did, there are some passages of interest in this connection. So far as the Trinitarian doctrine has been found in Jesus' words at all, it has mainly been in passages in this

gospel. One famous saying, often mistakenly interpreted, is John 10:30, "I and the Father are one." The best comment on that saying is that of the little boy who cried out when he heard his father read it, "Just like you and me, isn't it, Papa?" That is all it means; to read it in the original Greek is to see that it means one in heart, spirit, purpose, one in sympathy and love, as every son of God should be one with his Father. And if we read the rest of the passage we find Jesus here explaining precisely what is meant by these words. The Jews would stone him because they thought that by using such language he was making himself equal with God, thus speaking blasphemy. Jesus explains that he means no such thing. "Is it not written in your law," he asks, "I said, Ye are gods? If he called them 'gods' to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), say ye of him whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the son of God?" You see he himself explains his words as equivalent only to "I am the son of God." The Old Testament passage referred to is Psalm 82:6. It is interesting to quote the whole of it: "I said, ye are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High." That is precisely what "I and the Father are one" means. The same gospel later on (John 17:22) explains again exactly how these words are meant, when Jesus prays for his disciples "that they may be one even as we are one." Jesus and his Father, God, are one *just as* the followers of Jesus should be one in Christian fellowship. Another perfectly parallel passage in the New Testament is Paul's saying about himself and one of his fellow-apostles, (I Cor. 3:8). "I planted, Apollos

watered . . . . Now he that planteth and he that watereth *are one.*" And both, we might add, were one with their common Father. No, such language does not so much as hint at any Trinity or any godhead of Jesus. As a matter of fact, it is the Unitarian Jesus who says, "I and the Father are *one.*" The Trinitarian Jesus would have to say, "I and the Father are *two*"; not one person, but the first and the second persons of the Trinity. Jesus could not be one with the *Father;* he would have to be one with the *Son.* That same gospel of John (14:9) has again these words of Jesus, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." In Trinitarian language this would mean that Jesus is the *first* person of the Trinity, not the second; it ought to read, "He that hath seen me hath seen the *Son.*" But of course it means nothing of the sort; it means only that such a god-like life as Jesus' reveals God himself, the divine Father, the whole God, all the God there is. Man was made in the image of God, the book of Genesis tells us; not in the image of the Trinity, nor of the third Person the Spirit, nor of the second Person the Son, but of the first and only person, God the Father. In Jesus that image shone out clear and bright, for all the world to see. "No man hath seen God at any time"—save as a holy son of God reveals in his character and life the Father in whose image he is made.

Can you see the motto in golden letters on the wall above my head, Scripture words which have stood there since this church was erected nearly ninety years ago (in 1836), earlier than any other now standing in Meadville? They were taken over from the Old First Unitarian Church of Philadelphia,

the first to bear that name in America, whose building was the model for ours, text and all. The words are from John 17:3. Jesus is addressing the Father and says, "This is life eternal, that they might know *thee the only true God,* and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." The Father is declared the only true God: that is the Unitarianism of Jesus. Similarly in the same gospel (10:29) occur the absolutely unequivocal words, "My Father is greater than I." The Trinitarian creed declares it mortal heresy to believe one of the three divine persons either greater or less than another. Unitarians agree with Jesus rather than with the creed.

Jesus does sometimes speak of himself, as we speak of him, as the son of God, but he speaks vastly more often of his hearers and followers as sons of God, in clearly the same sense, so that there is no Trinitarianism here. Surely the famous words "my Father and your Father, my God and your God" lend no support to the view that he was a Trinitarian. God cannot pray to God; Jesus was a man of prayer. Such a simple statement as "He continued all night in prayer to God" (Luke 6:12) cannot mean the second person of God praying to the first. It is a god-like man communing with his Father in heaven.

We share, then, that great apostolic confession of faith, "To us there is one God the Father." It finds many expressions in New Testament pages. For example, "There is one God, one mediator also between God and men, himself man, Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5); if language has any meaning, the Christian who wrote this was not making Christ Jesus a person of the Godhead, alongside the Father. He places Jesus, not on the God side, but explicitly

on the man side. There is one God, and one Master who is man, who leads his fellow-men to God. Paul writes of Jesus when his great work for men is done (I Cor. 15:24-28), "He shall deliver up the Kingdom to God, even the Father . . . . and then shall the Son also himself be subjected to him . . . . that God may be all in all." Here God is absolutely identified with the Father, and to make Jesus the Son a part or person of God is to make nonsense of the whole great passage. Or take Paul's greeting to his churches, at the beginning of his letters, "Grace to you and peace from God our Father—and the Lord Jesus Christ." God is *Our Father;* the Lord Jesus Christ is another. Or take Paul's beautiful benediction, "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the holy Spirit, be with you all." Jesus and the Spirit are mentioned, alongside God, not as persons of God. If I speak of the grace of my mother, the love of my father, the fellowship of my brother, does anyone suppose I mean three component parts of one being? Neither does Paul when he invokes for his people the grace of Jesus, the love of God, the fellowship of the divine Spirit. The three great spiritual possessions of the early Christians, as of Christians today, were God their Father, Jesus their Master (or "Lord" in King James English) and the spirit of God in their own hearts and lives. However these are spoken of, singly, or two together, or three together, only one is ever thought of as God, as an object of worship. "The true worshippers shall worship *the Father* (John 4:23)—in spirit and in truth." Yes, always and only and ever.

If I am thus pointing out that Unitarian theology

has in its favor the utterance of Jesus and of the New Testament writers, I am not meaning to indicate that its basis is merely the interpretation of texts, however venerable and inspiring. The free man of today builds his faith on the facts of religious experience and upon the unfettered exercise of his god-given reason, the highest revelations within his seeking yet adoring spirit. We are Unitarians, in short, because God thus reveals himself to us, not because the Bible maintains this view, though we are glad to find in the Bible that God so revealed himself also to Jesus and the apostles. To those who tell us that we must believe the Trinitarian doctrine because the New Testament says so we must in the interest of truth reply that the New Testament does not say so. But even if it did say so, we would not find that a sufficient ground for believing it. Other foundation is laid for our faith. As Channing said for us all, long ago, "I am surer that my rational nature is from God than that any book is the expression of his will." Our rational nature, our moral nature and our spiritual nature combine to give us our free faith, and in this faith we rejoice to belong to the great discipleship of Jesus.

The Man of Nazareth we revere as the great Master. Make him as god-like as you will, we shall not challenge you. Let no one who hears me ever believe the common saying that Unitarians reject the divinity (or divineness) of Christ. This saying is based on ignorance, not only of Unitarianism, but of the meaning of terms. It is our characteristic doctrine, that of the incarnation, of God finding manifestation in our human flesh. And his supreme manifestation has assuredly come in Jesus. He was

the child of God in the only possible way, by revealing the qualities of God—love, truth, holiness—in his character and life. The most perfect man is necessarily the most like God, necessarily the most divine. Men, reflecting on the loveliness of Jesus' personality, said in wonder, "God is like that!" That was true, that was touchingly real. Then came the theologians, the councils of disputing bishops, fixing a creedal statement by which they could assert the godlikeness of Jesus, and yet have but one God. We can understand sympathetically what they were trying to express, but we can answer their problem more simply and truly by saying with the New Testament, "God was in this human life as in all human lives, only more fully, intensely, completely, because this heart was pure, this will consecrated, this spirit exalted." Divine? *Yes.* Human? *Yes.* "Draw if thou canst," as Emerson says,

> "the mystic line
> Severing rightly his and thine,
> Which is human, which divine."

Thus, as the highest example of the purest religious experience, of the oneness of the human child with the divine Father, Jesus serves us immeasurably in the religious experience. But he does not serve us as God, by taking the place of God, but as leading us to God. Test your theology by your own religious experience. Do you ever pray to the Trinity? The God whom you find in the depths of your soul in your most hallowed moments, with whom you have sweet communion, is he three persons, or just one, your heavenly Father? When sorrow or loss comes and you fall on your knees

and cry out in prayer, do you cry to three listening ears, or do you say, "My Father, hear me"? The God of the soul's experience is never the Trinity. The Trinity comes in through the mind, in hours of reflection, not in moments of deep feeling, of religious experience. In the moment of prayer we are all Unitarians, all just children of the heavenly Father, reaching out to take his single hand in the darkness. Does the Christian world find any difficulty in letting its devotion rise to God in the hymn "Nearer, my God, to Thee" because that hymn is an expression of Unitarian piety, written by an ardent Unitarian? The God the writer longs to be nearer is the Unitarian one God the Father; would any soul be more greatly helped or elevated if the lyric prayer were, "Nearer, O Three Divine Persons, to You"? No, there is no Trinitarianism in devotion.

Men sometimes pray to Jesus, as Roman Catholics pray to his mother, to his father or to his grandmother, or to other saints. Such devotion we need not decry, so long as it is genuine; they pray to the God in Jesus, pray to God as revealed and apprehended through him, or through the gracious ideal of the holy Mother, or through some brave and pure saint. Just so the orphaned girl falls on her knees by her bedside and cries out, "O Mother who has gone from me, be with me to comfort and help me as I try to walk the path of life alone." Such prayer we can all understand. But no one prays to the Trinity; this doctrine has no response in the human experience of religion.

May I say a word out of my own life? Like very many of my fellow Unitarians, I have come into

my present religious fellowship from another. I was a Trinitarian, brought up in an "Evangelical" church, "converted" in an orthodox revival, assuming church membership and my share of church work. Yet in my devotions, my inward experience of prayer and communion, I found that my God was one, the Father. And so I became a Unitarian by myself, before I saw a Unitarian Church, heard or read a Unitarian sermon, or scarcely knew that such a form of Christianity existed. My love to Jesus, my loyal devotion to him as son of God, my elder brother and master, grew. I consecrated my life to his religion; it is my joy to give my days and my years to the teaching of his gospel and making him better known, that others may love him and follow him and through him be led to God. With all the earnestness and sincerity of which I am capable I want to say that Jesus means infinitely more to me, does infinitely more for me, than in the days when I knew him as a supernatural figure, the second person in a triune God.

Values the Trinitarian belief must have for many, else they would not hold it, but for me it takes away all Jesus' helpfulness for the religious life. For the Christian life is the imitation of Christ, and I cannot, in any real sense, imitate the second person of the Trinity. This person can be no model for you and me. What we need is an example of what is possible for human nature, with God's help. I know that a God can be pure and true and brave and unselfish; but that knowledge does not help me to be so. What I want to know is that a man can be, a man made as I am made. The New Testament is alive to this aspect of the matter; that is why it

says so truly, just as we Unitarians say, "As the first-born among many brethren, it behooved him in all things to be made like his brethren, tempted in all points like as we are, learning obedience by the things which he suffered," as we all must. "For as by man came death into the world, so also by man came the resurrection of the dead." That Paul means the second person of the Trinity when he speaks of the first-born of many brothers, that he means a member of the God-head when he declares that *by man* came the resurrection from the dead, is possible to believe only if we are under the compulsion of a system of dogma. It is precisely the value of Jesus for Paul that he came in the likeness of sinful flesh, came as man to uplift man, both he that sanctifies and they that are sanctified being all of one, as the Epistle to the Hebrews so finely puts it.

What man needs is the revelation of love and goodness and purity, of godlikeness, in a human life like his own; then he realizes that the god-like life is possible for him too and he is moved to struggle toward its attainment. We look upon the stainless manhood of Jesus, upon his glorious career, and we say, "Ah, there is faith, there are courage, love, purity, self-sacrifice, all the divinest qualities, embodied in a son of man, not in a god, of another nature than mine, but in that very human nature which I inherit. It is not the eagle calling upon the blind worm to fly; it is the free-pinioned bird of the open sky calling to its fellow-birds that they too have wings. Loose them, spread them, rise from the dark shades of earth into the freedom of the upper air, for which you are destined!"

Jesus is our Leader, because he walked in the same path we must tread; our Master, because we cannot choose but follow him; our example, because we have similar divine possibilities; our Brother, because he and we have the same Father. We owe him an allegiance, a devotion, a reverence, such as we owe to no other save to his God and our God, to his Father and our Father. We take his hand, because he is one of us. We cry out when the theologians take him from us and make him a God, not because we are troubled by a mistaken doctrine, but because they have taken away our Master and we know not where they have laid him.

To us there is one God the Father; we do not want that heavenly throne shared by any other, two, or three, or however many. Show us the Father, and it suffices us. But Oh! to us there is also one Master, Jesus Christ, who is precious not because he is God, but because he leads us to God. We are Unitarians because we would be loyal to the deepest convictions of him who said, "Not every one who saith unto me, Lord, Lord, (still less everyone who says, God, God,) but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven, shall enter into the Kingdom."

[No. 300]

THE TAPESTRY-WEAVERS

BY

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The American Unitarian Association was Founded in 1825 with the Following Expressed Purpose

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*The General Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, passed the following vote at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man."

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

THE TAPESTRY-WEAVERS

Several years ago Anson Chester printed a remarkable poem entitled "The Tapestry-Weavers." The poem was written just after Mr. Chester had returned from the Orient. In the East he had visited a little village in Persia where they weave these large tapestries with which we are beginning to adorn the walls of our museums and public buildings. While there, he tells us, he watched with a kind of fascination the simple-minded weavers at their work. It seems that for some good technical reason these tapestries have to be woven from below. The loom, therefore, is suspended above the worker's head. And so it happens that all he sees, as he weaves along hour after hour, is the uninteresting and ugly underside of this work of his hands. Even the design which the master weaver has given the worker for his guidance is a mere colorless diagram of lines, each line marked with a number to indicate what color and texture of thread he must use in the working out of the intricate and unseen figures on the upper side of the great fabric. So the weaver works along, hour after hour, day in and day out, following slavishly the design of the master-weaver, and with only the vaguest premonition of the thing of beauty his tired hands are perfecting. But at last the great day comes! The tapestry is completed. The thing of beauty which all through the weary months has been hanging just over his head is removed at last

from the loom. For a few moments he is permitted to gaze upon the completed fabric. And when it bursts upon him in all its wonder and glory he can hardly believe the sight of his eyes; it is all so lovely! And he is proud now and just a little bit ashamed of his hours of rebellion against his hard task in life.

So it is with Life itself, Mr. Chester tells us in his poem. The world is the Loom. God is the Master-Designer. We are the weavers. And as often as not we just work along slavishly on the underside of the great fabric of our lives, not seeing any very colorful design in it and at times none too sure that it has any deeper meaning at all. Thus the days come and go over our heads, the endless succession of days with their numbers of problems and duties. We accept the duties as inevitable. We solve the problems as best we can with what little wisdom is in us. We follow the lines laid out before us. But we grow weary, disgruntled, disheartened with the monotonous routine of it all. We work along doggedly, just from habit and with no inspiration, no freedom, no joy. Yes, but there are moments, moments of larger vision, when we catch a fleeting glimpse of the upper side of our lives; we see something of the hidden beauty and mysterious meaning of it all. And then we are filled with a great and quiet and solemn contentment.

There are three kinds of prosaic people in the world who will find this tapestry-weaver view of life rather uninspiring and at times positively intolerable. Thus: there are those who chafe more or less all the time over the deadly monotony of their

life, the wearisome routine of it all. "It is all well enough for poets to go mooning about among life's hidden meanings," they cry, "and for prophets to go up into mounts of vision. But we are the workers of the world, the humdrum workers of the world. And we understand some things that are hidden from the poets and the prophets. We see, as they never can, the ugly, wearisome underside of life. To put it plainly, it isn't exactly inspiring to go to the same old office day after day; to write the same old letters; to confer with the same old clients. It isn't exactly inspiring, if you be a home-maker, to plan the same old meals, make the same old beds, get the same blessed children off to school day in and day out. All this hack work! It is this that takes all the poetry out of a man's life and all the vision out of his soul."

Yes, it is. Indeed life, when looked at from a rigorously practical and prosaic point of view, is even more disheartening than we are picturing it here. We are apt to suppose that it is only the hard-pressed, humdrum, common-place people who are condemned to this monotonous routine in life. The really great man, the man of unusual talents or gifts, we imagine, escapes this dreadful drudgery. The great singer: he just stands up and pours out his soul in song! The great painter: he just sits down by his canvas; a few free sweeps of the brush, and, behold, on the canvas the thing of perfect Beauty which is in his soul! The great writer: give him a good pen and a little ink and paper, and, while you wait, he will dash off a perfect poem or an epoch-making essay! So we imagine. But it isn't so. The singer, no matter how great his talent,

never reaches a point where he no longer needs to practice his singing scales hour after hour. The painter, no matter how great his beauty of soul, must keep up his drawing or else even his skillful hands will lose their cunning. And the writer? . . . One night I was talking in his study with one of our great American essayists, perhaps our greatest since Emerson. In the course of our talk together, I said to him, "It must be great, my friend, to be able to sit down as you do whenever you feel like it and dash off an essay which the whole English public will be reading within twenty-four hours after it is off the press." He looked at me in astonishment. "What do you mean?" he said. "Dash it off! Why, I sweat blood over every page." And then he went on to tell me of the drudgery he went through in the writing of every one of these essays which seem to the reader to have flowed so spontaneously from the end of his pen; how sometimes he would write and rewrite a single page ten or fifteen times before he could come anywhere near saying in plain English the great truth that was in his soul.

And so it turns out that no man, whether he be a genius or a mediocrity,— no man and no occupation, no business, no profession in life is entirely free from this element of drudgery. We all, from the least to the greatest of us, must do our stint at the uninteresting underside of the great fabric of life. This whether we like it or not. Everything, our success, our usefulness, our greatness, depends upon the frankness and the courage and the wisdom with which we face this hard fact of life.

But this rather gloomy view of life in no way

discredits the poet's dream or the prophet's vision. There is drudgery in every successful, useful, great life. Yes, drudgery enough. But the tedium of it is brightened, and the burden of it lightened, for any man who has a great design in his secret soul; who is faithful to that alone; and who pauses now and then to make sure he is making of his life the thing of Beauty he in his moments of vision has seen it to be.

It isn't a matter of colors, whether they be gaudy or drab. It isn't a question of talents, whether they be few or many. It isn't the magnitude of a man's work nor the ease with which he does it. It isn't the width of the circle of his influence. Not any one of these things determines the usefulness, the success, the greatness of a man's life. Is he following the design in his soul? That is the question. Is he taking what colors are his and with a master hand weaving them into the fabric of his life? Some very beautiful tapestries have been woven of some very drab colors! Is he investing what talents he has in a way to make humanity the richer and happier for his having worked his way through life? Is he filling the circle of his life, whether it be narrow or wide, full to overflowing with justice and good will? The few or the many who do come within the radius of his influence, do they find enlightenment or joy in him? These are the questions. And whether a man shall find his life a thing of hopeless drudgery or a thing of perfect delight will depend upon the spirit in which he answers these questions as he goes on his hard-working way.

Then there are those who grow tired of their particular colors in life, their particular design in

the great fabric, their particular place at the great Loom of Life. They lift up their eyes now and then and look over at their neighbor at the next loom. And somehow the design he is working on looks so much more alluring, his colors so much more beautiful, his loom so much bigger!

If some psychometric machine should be devised to measure the amount of energy we human beings waste in various ways, we would be amazed, and, I hope, appalled to discover how much energy we expend in envying our neighbor's lot in life. The business man, for example, thinks the professional man has the easier and more interesting field of labor. The professional man is sure the business man is playing the more vital rôle in the great drama of life. The home-maker, planning her three meals, making her beds, and getting her youngsters off to school, day in and day out, is sure her maiden-sister has the freer, the happier, the more independent career in life. Meanwhile, her maiden-sister would gladly give up all her freedom and her career for the joys of home and motherhood! It would be laughable if it were not so pathetic, this way we have of longing to be in the other man's shoes.

And here again we must go to the poets and prophets for wisdom. To be content with one's lot in life; to be willing to make the most of one's own part in the great fabric of life and to put into that one's very best workmanship and one's very loveliest colors; this is the beginning of wisdom. It is great to be working on some heroic figure in the very center of the great tapestry! Yes, but just as great to be working somewhere out on the border.

For it is all beautiful and all a part of the total design of life. And the greatness of a man's life consists not in the magnitude of his work but in the greatness of spirit he puts into it.

And then there are some good people who do not believe in life at all. They can see no very great purpose in it and no promise beyond the present moment with its passing pleasures and pains. "Talk about this lovely fabric of life!" they cry, "Call it a thing of beauty designed by a Master-Designer! You look close enough at it just once, you dreamer! and this vision of beauty will vanish into thin air! You will see life as it is, a very drab and ugly and colorless thing, all full of snarls and knots and loose ends and broken threads. Listen to it attentively, you poet! and you will find it a thing of discords without rhyme or reason. Behold! cruelty on all sides; every man's hand turned against his brother; wretchedness and misery exposing its sores on every street corner; injustice in the hearts of men and folly in their lives. Man, a master-weaver, a little lower than the angels? Why! man is only a little higher than the beasts of the field! He is still a carnivorous animal, filled with all manner of sensuousness and rapacity."

This is the judgment of an increasing number of very thoughtful and very conscientious men and women to-day. Clemenceau, for example. Read his volume of stories, "Surprises of Life," in which under the form of fiction he has given to the world his deliberate judgment upon this humanity of ours, a judgment based upon a very wide experience of the more seamy side of this fabric of human life. In every one of these tales from his vitriolic

pen this disillusioned old man fairly shouts his horrible, laughing scorn, in defiance of a Heaven he is sure is empty of all divinity and in contempt of a Life he is sure is empty of all purpose. Or read Romain Rolland's Clerambault. There you will see depicted the life of a man not yet quite disillusioned, but whose heart is broken over the follies and brutalities of this present generation of men.

Now what shall we do? Whither shall we turn for guidance and inspiration, when men like Clemenceau and Rolland, the one a fighter, the other a dreamer, both falter in their leadership? The question is serious and upon the answer hang weighty consequences for ourselves and for the generation of our children who are to come after us.

What shall we do and whither turn? Well, we must not begin by turning our backs upon any of the facts of life. We must not, ostrich-like, hide our heads at the approach of every danger, every storm cloud. The fact is that humanity,— this generation of men and women standing here in the dawn of this new century, has made a sorry thing of the great fabric of human life. We have gotten the skein of it all snarled up. We have broken millions of these precious threads of human life. We have not followed the designs of the Most High within us. And whether humanity will have patience enough to tie up all these broken threads and unsnarl the tangled skeins of life is an open question. Perhaps the great Master-Designer will discard the whole fabric of this human life here on this planet,— discard it as altogether too ugly to go on with? Perhaps the human race will go down to

extinction alongside of the Pterodactyl and the Ichthyosaurus? And after we of this generation have gone the way of all flesh, then, it may be, the great Life of the World will create a new and more promising species of life somewhere on this great Loom we call the Universe? May be. Some of the most experienced men of this generation are asking just these questions and raising just these doubts in the minds of the on-coming generation,— growling about it like Clemenceau, the old Tiger, or weeping about it like Rolland, the incurable dreamer. These men must be reckoned with! There is something in the devilish cynicism of the Clemenceaus of today and something in the divine despair of the Rollands, which is getting a strong hold upon the imagination and a deep seat in the hearts of the youth of to-day.

It is no time for the shutting of these eyes of ours against the unpleasant facts of life. Let us blink none of the facts! Not one! Let us view Life as it is! Yes, by all means. But let us make very sure we are seeing life, *as it is*. Let us face the facts. By all means. But let us face *all* the facts. Let us not turn our backs upon any of the ugliness, any of the follies in this human nature of ours. No; but let us not turn our backs upon what is beautiful and wise in human life either! Perhaps, if the whole truth were seen, the beauty would be found to outshine the ugly. Perhaps the wise are confounding the foolish at this very moment! Perhaps in the eternal point of view which embraces all our littler human points of view things are not so ugly, and life not so utterly foolish, as it appears on the under surface. Perhaps the Master-

Weaver loves this fabric of our human life. With all its knots and snarls loves it! Loves it for the fidelity we are working into the woof of it! Perhaps the trouble is all with us,— our eyes are so blinded with tears, our hearts so heavy with despair, our souls so narrowed with bitterness, that we see the great panorama of Life all out of its true perspective. Perhaps!

One day I visited one of the old galleries of Europe to see a Rembrandt portrait which had just been placed on exhibition there. "The Portrait of a Lady," it was called. The place was crowded and, as it happened, I was pushed up with my face almost touching the canvas. And as I looked, what I saw appeared just like an ugly blotch, as if the artist had stood off and thrown his pigments spattering upon the canvas. One spot seemed to me particularly offensive, a spot of red which resembled nothing so much as a bloody, angry, open sore. But presently the crowd thinned out somewhat and I was able to stand off and look at the portrait in its true perspective. And, oh, but it was lovely! Such grace of feature! Such mystery of hidden thoughts! Such benignity of countenance! And the blotch of red? It turned out to be a precious jewel on my lady's finger!

Which experience is a parable. Do you remember the day, years ago, when your whole life seemed ruined? Some disaster, undeserved and unprovoked, had fallen upon your defenceless and innocent head? All your fondest ambitions seemed defeated? All your hopes and dreams lay shattered at your feet? Life seemed very ugly to you in that hour? And your heart was aflame with an angry

resentment against Fate, against Life, against God? Yes, but that was years ago. You are older now, and wiser in the ways of life. You can stand off now, if only you will, and look back over the years. You see knots and snarls and broken threads and many a marred design back there. Yes, snarled and broken and marred, but not ruined! You see it all now in its true perspective. You see where with weary fingers you tied up the broken threads of life and went on with the weaving. And even the ugliest place has now taken on a beauty all its own, — as of a precious jewel.

And this which is true of you and me with our single strands of life is true of the whole fabric of life. This fabric we call civilization has withstood some mighty strains upon it in the past history of the human spirit on this globe, but without altogether breaking. Civilization didn't end with Sodom and Gomorrah, dark as that time was in the history of the world. It didn't end with the crucifixion of the Galilean dreamer and poet,— surely the darkest period thus far in the life of mankind on this earth. It didn't end with the complete collapse of Rome a few years later. It didn't end with the Dark Ages. It didn't end with Napoleon, the most sinister figure who ever walked this earth alive! No, and it is isn't going to end with this twentieth century darkness and blindness and folly.

Remember Theodore Parker, the great American preacher of liberal religion and of social reform. Parker felt that he was living in a very dark age in the history of the world. He poured out his soul in mighty protest against the stupidities and iniquities of his day. He fought slavery with a kind

of divine frenzy. He put the weight of his whole personality on the wide of the widows and orphans and exploited classes of his day. Finally his body and his spirit both broke under the strain. One day toward the end, so the story goes, he turned to the friend by his bedside and said, "Well, old friend of mine, I guess the trouble with me is that I'm in a hurry and God isn't!"

So with us to-day. We grow hurried in spirit; and impatient; at times altogether disheartened. Yes, we men do. But the great Creative Life of the World which has begotten us here in this earth is not so easily discouraged. It hasn't ever yet hurried to gain its eternal ends. Not once. It has infinite resources within itself and endless time. In all the ages of the past the Master-Weaver has gone on weaving. He has picked up the broken threads of life and tied them together somehow.

And so the weaving will go on tomorrow, in the great tomorrow which is already dawning over this earth. The very knots and snarls over which we growl and weep to-day will go into the fabric. And some day our children and our children's children will look back upon the part we have woven. They will find it very imperfect in certain spots and rather pathetic at certain times. Yes, but very beautiful just the same. They will see the lines of beautiful fidelity we have woven into it. And even the places where in a kind of divine impatience with ourselves we grasped the sorry skein of our life and broke its threads, only to go to work and tie all the loose ends together again,—even these marred and mended parts they will look upon with a smile of secret understanding. Posterity will

honor us not for the perfection of our craft but for the fidelity with which we have gone on believing in a Design and in a Master-Designer within our souls. And these children of ours, never fear! they will take up the fabric of life where our weary hands have dropped it.

THE American Unitarian Association is the working missionary organization of the Unitarian churches of America. It seeks to promote sympathy and united action among Liberal Christians, and to spread the principles which are believed by Unitarians to be essential to civil and religious liberty and progress and to the attainments of the spiritual life. To this end it supports missionaries, establishes and maintains churches, holds conventions, aids in building meeting-houses, publishes, sells and gives away books, sermons, tracts, hymn-books, and devotional works.

A list of free tracts will be sent on application. A full descriptive catalogue of the publications of the Association, including doctrinal, devotional and practical works, will be sent to all who apply.

The Association is supported by the voluntary contributions of churches and individuals.

There are two forms of membership in this Association provided for those who desire to cooperate in the spread of liberal religious thought and influence:

I. *Life Membership.* Any individual may, by the payment of $50, become a *Life Member* of the American Unitarian Association. Such a person is entitled to vote at all business meetings, to receive the Year Book and Annual Report, and, by means of frequent communications, is kept in touch with the various enterprises promoted by the Association.

II. *Associate Membership.* Other individuals desiring to affiliate with the Association may become *Associate Members* by signing an application card (sent upon request) and the payment of $1.00. As such they will receive a certificate of *Associate Membership,* each new pamphlet as it is issued, and other communications from Headquarters, and upon the additional payment of 50 cents, a year's subscription to *Unitarian Word and Work,* the monthly magazine reporting denominational news.

Address communications and contributions to the

American Unitarian Association

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A History of Unitarianism

BY

CHARLES GRAVES

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AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION
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The American Unitarian Association was Founded in 1825 with the Following Expressed Purpose

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*The General Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, passed the following vote at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.*)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man."

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

A HISTORY OF UNITARIANISM

The Name

So far as is known the name Unitarian originated in Hungary. It was used there at first as the title of an association of religious believers of various sorts in the year 1568 or thereabouts. Peter Bod, the Transylvanian historian, who was too bitterly prejudiced against the doctrines constituting Unitarianism to make his statements concerning it always trustworthy, relates that in 1557 the Diet of Thorda in Transylvania passed an edict (ratified in 1563) granting universal freedom of worship. At about the same time the various religious bodies within the country formed a league of toleration pledging themselves not to persecute one another. The members of this league were popularly called "The United" or "Unitarians." So at first the title carried no sort of theological significance whatever. Embracing as it did all kinds of Christian believers, it indicated simply a fraternal relationship. This league, or union of fraternity and tolerance, did not long endure. Dissensions arising from more or less sharp differences of belief resulted in the withdrawal of those who held that belief in the dogma of the Trinity was fundamental to Christian faith and not to believe it an almost unpardonable sin. This withdrawal emphasized the Trinitarianism of those who withdrew and the lack of it in those who remained loyal to the league. These latter were the non-trinitarians, perhaps anti-trinitarians, believing in God as One instead of "God in Three

Persons." They were called Unitarians, however, not because of this belief, but because they still remained members of the league of "The United" or "Unitarians." It was natural and unavoidable that the title should come at last to mark the distinguishing faith of those persons who remained loyal to the league. While "no confirmation of this can be found from Unitarian sources" Bod's explanation is probably not far wrong. Unless something of this sort had happened it is more than likely that the belief that "God is One" would have at that time been called by the distinctly theological term "Arianism." What is certain, however, is that the name Unitarian appears in the decree of the Transylvania Diet at Léczfalva, 25 Oct. 1600. Thirty-eight years later the name was ratified by Transylvania Unitarians as the official designation of their churches. It may well be assumed, in the absence of contrary testimony, that this name was chosen as the official designation instead of the purely theological term Arian because of the meaning it had when used as the name of the league of fraternity and tolerance. Although since then it has come to have a distinctly theological significance, and is to-day generally used to distinguish those persons and churches within Christianity who stand for simple monotheism from those who hold the Trinitarian formula, yet this early non-theological meaning of the name does best express the meaning which most Unitarians to-day give it.

Growth of Central Idea

Unitarianism, that is the faith of those in Transylvania who in 1600 accepted the name as the

official designation of their churches, and of those who since and in other countries have adopted the name or had it applied to them, may be said to be a belief that "God is One." The most conspicuous point of departure from Trinitarianism, the point usually emphasized, is the refusal to regard Jesus as "very God of very God" and the assertion that he was distinctly and unqualifiedly a human being. This belief in some form and of varying degree "has accompanied Christianity from the beginning, at least as one of its forms." Tertulian (circa 200), the first to introduce the term Trinitas into Christianity, is authority for the statement that in his day "the common people think of Christ as a man." It is usually conceded that even though it might not be correct to speak of Christianity during the first two or three centuries as being substantially Unitarian, it at least was not Trinitarian. It was this generally held belief that Christ was a man that Arius was trying to save in his conflict with Athanasius. It was this championship of Arius, of the human side of Jesus, that for centuries gave the name Arianism to any belief in the humanity of Jesus. But as the Arians expressed their belief in the great theological controversy that was had at Nicea (325), the difference between them and the Trinitarians was not very marked. The latter insisted that Jesus Christ was "of one substance" with the Father, the Arians refusing to go further than to concede that the Son was "of like substance" with the Father. Although the decision at Nicea was against the Arian view, faith in the simple humanity of Jesus persisted all through the centuries, and those who held this view were

usually subjected to bitter persecution. Differing interpretations of the Trinity were the cause of frequent disturbances within the Church from the time of Arius, but it is not until the upheaval occasioned by the Reformation of the 16th century that really serious anti-Trinitarian opinion and propaganda are met with. So rapidly did these opinions gather force and win considerable following that the "reformers" no less than the Roman Church found it necessary to take measures against them. According to the temper and civilization of the times such measures were not marked by gentleness or humanity. Anti-Trinitarian opinions were, however, nourished rather than suppressed by persecution.

The burning of Servetus (1553) at the stake in Geneva, at the direct instigation of Calvin, for the sin of writing and publishing (1531) the book "Errors of the Trinity" (Calvin's copy is one of the two or three copies of this book surviving) may be said to mark the beginning of Unitarianism as a definite and continuous movement. But Michael Servetus was not the first to suffer martyrdom for disbelief in the Trinity. Bishop Mant in his "History of Ireland" records that in 1326 at Dublin one "Adam Duff was burned alive for his denial of the Trinity." In 1551 George Van Parris was burned for a like offence. Before Servetus there were others who had written against the Trinity; among these may be mentioned Martin Cellarius (1499-1564), a close friend of Luther, and Ludwig Haetzer, whose views, however, were not disclosed until after his execution (1529) for Anabaptism. But it was Servetus who first put the issue squarely before the world.

"Your trinity," he writes, "is a product of subtlety and madness. The Gospel knows nothing of it. The old Fathers are strangers to these vain distinctions. It is from the school of the Greek Sophists, that you, Athanasius, prince of tritheists, have borrowed it."

First Organized Beginnings

In Poland, Hungary, England

A group of men in Italy had incurred displeasure because of their more or less outspoken opposition to belief in the Trinity, and they concluded it was the part of wisdom to move to other countries. Among these were Lelio Socinus and his uncle, Faustus, and Giorgio Blandrata or Biandrata. The greatest degree of freedom of religious thought was to be found at this time in the countries of Poland and Hungary. Considerable anti-Trinitarian preaching was going on there. In Poland the names of Gonesius and Gregory Pauli are the most noted, and in Transylvania, Bishop Francis David. With the coming of Blandrata, a physician, to Poland in 1558, "the spirit of Unitarian dissent entered upon a career of marked activity and success." In 1565 "a division of Polish Protestants took place, resulting in the establishing at that time of a Unitarian church." Fourteen years later (1579) Faustus Socinus (Sozzini) took up his residence at Cracow, and under his leadership the Unitarians, or, as they were more popularly known, Socinians, became a numerous and powerful body, "distinguished by the rank of their adherents, the ability and learning of their scholars, the excellence of their schools, and the superiority and wide circulation of their theological literature." Racow was

their theological and educational centre. Here was published the Racovian Catechism — the first Unitarian catechism—in the Polish language in 1605. In 1608 it was issued in the German language and in the Latin in 1609. In the preface to a later and revised edition of this catechism the Unitarian attitude and spirit of this period are reflected in the remark, "we think we need not blush if our Church continues to make progress in some matters." A few years after the death of Socinus (1604) the Catholic reaction made itself felt. Unitarian churches and schools and printing establishments were gradually closed and confiscated, and in 1658 all adherents of "the Arian and Anabaptist sect were commanded to quit the kingdom within two years." Thus ended organized Unitarianism in Poland.

In the neighboring kingdom of Transylvania (Hungary) the Unitarian movement ran a somewhat similar course, except there it was not wholly destroyed by the Catholic reaction. There is some dispute as to the actual founder of Unitarianism in this country. Blandrata—who later was instrumental in starting the persecution of Unitarians when for purely personal reasons he sought to return to the Catholic Church — in 1563 came from Poland to Transylvania and "was made physician-in-ordinary to the king, John Sigismund"; and it is assumed that "through his influence the king, the king's mother, and many nobles accepted the Unitarian faith." Francis David, "now regarded as the true apostle of Transylvania Unitarianism," was elected (1564) bishop of the Calvinistic churches. His liberal and eloquent preaching attracted multitudes in

Klausenberg, and caught the attention of Blandrata, who used his good offices to have him appointed chaplain to the king in 1566. Here he preached the doctrine that "he who divided Christ into two, man and not man but God, he is a deceiver." In 1568 was issued a royal edict, confirmed by the Diet, giving to everyone complete freedom of conscience and of speech. During this year a great public debate was held with David and Peter Melius, a strict Calvinist, as the chief debaters. David triumphed and that "day the whole people of the town of Kolozsvar became Unitarian," which is probably an exaggeration but plainly reveals the power of David's preaching. "The example was followed by a large number of Transylvania towns." At about this time there were in this country 425 congregations Unitarian by profession. "In 13 higher schools and colleges besides that doctrine was taught by able professors, several of whom were refugees from other lands." By 1578 a serious controversy developed within the Unitarian churches. Blandrata, who was preparing to save himself in the powerful Catholic reaction which he saw coming, headed the party who were for maintaining that "Christ should be invoked with divine honors, though without any inherent title to such homage," and he called to his aid Faustus Socinus, who was a noted champion of this idea. The result was a "public explosion on David's part against the cultus of Christ in any shape or form." Whereupon, at the instigation of Blandrata, articles were drawn up "accusing David of innovation of doctrine," and presented to the Roman Catholic king then reigning. The accused was condemned to imprisonment

for life. "Five months later (1579) he died in the dungeon at Deva." Despite the confiscation of their schools and churches and printing establishments which followed, the Unitarians maintained their existence and with the enactment of a statute in 1791 granting "equal liberties and rights in Transylvania" a new day dawned for these churches. To-day there are 116 churches with a total membership of 80,000. These churches are presided over by Bishop Joseph Ferencz, a bishop being made necessary by the laws of the country.

The organized beginnings of Unitarianism in England may be said to date from about 1773, when Theophilus Lindsey, on the failure of the petition for relieving clergymen "from the burden of subscribing to the thirty-nine articles," resigned his "living in Yorkshire and gathered the first professedly Unitarian church in London." Prior to this time, however, there was considerable anti-Trinitarian sentiment. From 1551 to 1612 no less than nine persons suffered martyrdom on this account. In 1614 a Latin version of the Racovian catechism was publicly burned in London. Such treatment did not avail to stop the spread of this sentiment as is evident from an ordinance passed in 1648 making denial of the Trinity a capital offence. This ordinance was rendered inoperative by Oliver Cromwell, who refused to sanction the prosecution of Paul Best and John Biddle. The latter occasionally, from 1652 to 1662, held a "Socinian conventicle in London" and published much Unitarian or Socinian literature. In 1655 the great Dr. Owen complained that "there is not a city, a town, or scarce a village in England where some of this poison is not poured

forth," and the Act of Toleration (1689) specifically excluded papists and deniers of the Trinity. Thomas Emlyn, fined and imprisoned (1703) in Dublin for rejecting the deity of Christ, preached Unitarianism in London in 1705. William Robertson in Ireland — sometimes called the father of Unitarian nonconformity — seceded from the Established Church at a date earlier than Lindsey. The scholarly Nathaniel Lardner in 1730 advocated in his writings a purely humanitarian view of the Christ, as did also Dr. Joseph Priestley in 1767. A century before this John Milton taught a similar gospel in his "Christian Doctrine." Isaac Newton was an anonymous writer on the same doctrine and John Locke in his "Reasonableness of Christianity" (1695) ranged himself on the same side. Dr. Samuel Clarke, Isaac Watts and Philip Doddridge aided materially in the spread of "Socinian and Arian views among dissenters." When Dr. Lindsey withdrew from the Established Church and set up a Unitarian meeting-house in London, a number of ministers of Presbyterian chapels soon followed his example. In the case of these latter it was not necessary for the ministers to withdraw from the ministry of these institutions because the chapel trust deeds gave freedom of theological opinion, so there was nothing to prevent the chapels from accepting the Unitarian views. Thus it came to pass that a number of chapels with open trust deeds bodily went over to the Unitarian movement inaugurated by Dr. Lindsey.

In 1791 the Unitarian Book Society for the distribution of literature was organized, and from then on Unitarianism becomes a definitely organized force

in the religious life of England. In 1844 all civil disabilities which Unitarians had suffered were removed.

At present there are in Great Britain 370 places of Unitarian worship. The number of members is not known and estimates are useless. Manchester College, Oxford; The Unitarian Home Missionary College, Manchester; and Presbyterian College, Carmarthen, Wales, are the training schools for British Unitarian ministers. The British and Foreign Unitarian Association, with headquarters at Essex Hall, Essex Street, London, is the organization through which missionary and denominational enterprises are carried on. *The Christian Life* and *The Inquirer,* London, are the leading denominational periodicals.

Beginnings in America

It would not be correct to assume that Unitarianism in America, which appears subsequent to its organized existence in Europe, originated independent of all foreign influence. The intercourse between the people of the Old World and the New made that impossible. Besides, the migration of people from the older countries to America in search sometimes of a greater freedom naturally included some of the Unitarian way of thinking and believing. The most notable and influencing single incident was the coming of Dr. Joseph Priestley to the United States in 1794. Two Unitarian churches were founded by him—Northumberland, Pa. (1794), and Philadelphia (1796). The Unitarian church (1803) at Oldenbarnveld, later Trenton, now Barneveld, N. Y., was founded by a group of Dutch refu-

gees who had close relationship with the English Unitarians. These three churches have played a considerable part in the spread of Unitarianism in America, and the church at Barneveld furnished the inspiration to Mr. Huidekoper who later founded the theological school at Meadville, Pa.

The Mayflower Spirit

But, broadly speaking, American Unitarianism is of American origin. It is in part the fruit of the spirit of religious freedom embodied in the *Mayflower* compact, and in part the result of the democratic form of government which ruled the New England parish churches. It is a suggestive and significant fact that the oldest Pilgrim church in America, that founded at Plymouth in 1620, in 1801 declared itself to be Unitarian by a large majority vote, and this without making any change whatever in its covenant. This church, now Unitarian in name and fellowship, uses the identical statement of faith drawn up by its Pilgrim founders. American Unitarianism is in large part the product of the habit of many notable New England divines of thinking and speaking their own thoughts and of their utter dislike of anything that savored of monarchy in religion as well as in politics. It was also a product in part of their rebellion against what seemed to them to be the moral defects of the popular faith.

Unitarianism in New England

Before 1825, the date usually adopted as the beginning of organized Unitarianism in the United States, the ideas peculiar to Unitarianism were being preached by an ever-increasing number of the

New England clergy and laity. It is not possible within the space of this article to trace these beginnings. To Jonathan Mayhew, settled as minister of the West Church in 1747, belongs the honor of being the "first outspoken Unitarian in New England, not merely because he rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, but because he accepted all the cardinal principles developed by that movement since his day." More important, in some respects, was the action of the corporate body of King's Chapel, Boston — the first Episcopal church in New England — declaring for Unitarianism by inviting (1782) Rev. James Freeman to become its minister, and three years later voting to revise its Episcopal ritual by eliminating all Trinitarianism therefrom. During the last decade of the 18th century Unitarianism is reported to be "on the increase in the Southern counties of Massachusetts" and that "it is on the increase in Maine," but with the exception of King's Chapel and temporary societies in Portland and Saco, Me. (1792), the churches established at Northumberland (1794) and Philadelphia, Pa. (1796), there was nothing in the way of organized Unitarianism before the opening of the 19th century.

The next important incident after the action of King's Chapel was the outcome of a controversy within the old church at Plymouth. In 1799 the church and parish, voting separately as was the custom, chose the Rev. James Kendall as minister. The minority, opposed to the liberal or Unitarian views of Dr. Kendall, withdrew from the old church and established the church known as the "Church of the Pilgrimage," leaving the church of Brewster and Robinson to become one of the pioneer churches

in the Unitarian movement. Thus far the movement had gone along without creating anything more than local dissensions.

The Unitarian Controversy

But signs rapidly multiplied of the coming storm which was to rend New England Congregationalism into Orthodox and Unitarian. With the opening of the 19th century the clergy of the stricter sort were writing and speaking more critically and impatiently of the unorthodoxy that was being preached by a considerable number of eminent clergy. In one instance it went further than critical words. The Rev. John Sherman (grandson of Roger Sherman), minister of the First Church, Mansfield, Conn., was expelled (1805) from the Windham County Ministerial Association for his anti-Trinitarianism. In his defence he published the first anti-Trinitarian pamphlet on this side of the Atlantic, the title of which was "One God in One Person Only." The election of the Rev. Henry Ware, known as a Unitarian, as Hollis professor of divinity at Harvard College, was the signal for controversy and open strife to begin. Immediately a war of pamphlets and sermons and periodicals was on and separation came to be ever more and more inevitable. The stricter brethren widened the breach by establishing in 1808 a theological school at Andover to train clergy free from taint of the Unitarian heresy. The men charged with this heresy steadily denied that they were Unitarians or had any desire or purpose of being such, but in 1812 Dr. Belsham of England published his life of Theophilus Lindsey and in it he included a chapter on American Unitarianism which revealed a "much

closer alliance of several Boston liberals with the movement in England than they had been supposed willing to admit." In 1815 Dr. Jedidiah Morse saw the volume and forthwith gave wide publicity to the facts. He went further and in his periodical, *The Panoplist,* virtually charged the exponents of Unitarian ideas in New England with being afraid to come out in the open and acknowledge the real character of their teachings.

Unitarians Not Secessionists

Whatever the merits of the accusation—and the accusation is not without prejudice—it forced the controversy to a crisis which eventually resulted in the severance of New England Congregationalism into "Orthodox" and "Unitarian" by the withdrawal in many cases from the old parish churches of the orthodox party, leaving those of Unitarian ways of thinking in charge of the old church properties and organization. This seems to suggest, what is further borne out by an examination of the early New England church covenants, that the Unitarian movement in New England and consequently in America was not a secession from Congregationalism but a development of the principles upon which it was founded.

Unitarianism a Separate Movement

The men charged with heresy did not hesitate to show their colors. Such men as William Ellery Channing, settled over the Federal Street Church in Boston in 1813; Edward Everett, who became minister of the church in Brattle Street in 1814; Francis

Parkman, settled at the New North Church 1812, and others met the charges and criticisms by a more definite and outspoken presentation of the things they held to be true. Their position is not correctly described as being mainly anti-Trinitarian. They virtually called in question the whole doctrinal structure of orthodoxy. This was made clear by Dr. Channing in the sermon — now a historic landmark in Unitarianism — preached at the ordination of Jared Sparks in Baltimore, Md., in 1819. Dr. Channing used this occasion "to give a distinct statement of the opinions generally held by his liberal brethren,—their mode of interpreting the Scriptures, their views concerning God and Christ, their idea of the nature of his mission and mediation." This sermon marks the parting of the ways. The following year, overcoming their repugnance to even appear to favor organizing another religious body, the "liberal" ministers organized the Berry Street Conference for discussion among themselves.

Organization in America

Five years later (1825) "a club of some 25 liberal-minded and public-spirited citizens organized for social and philanthropic purposes," which had existed in Boston for some years, at a meeting held at the residence of Hon. Josiah Quincy, discussed "the advisability of forming an association to publish books and tracts setting forth the opinions and principles of the liberal party in the Congregational churches." The outcome was the forming, on May 25, 1825, of "a new society to be called the American Unitarian Association." By a chance coincidence the British and Foreign Unitarian Asso-

ciation was organized on the same day. Henceforth Unitarianism is recognized as one of the religious bodies of America.

Progressives and Conservatives

In America, as elsewhere, Unitarianism has experienced many conflicts within itself. The old order of things, the old thoughts were continually being challenged. In the early years Unitarians retained much supernaturalism in their belief and forms of worship as is seen in the fact that Ralph Waldo Emerson felt under the necessity of resigning as minister of the Second Church in Boston because the church refused to "discontinue or radically change the order of communion service." It became more and more clear that the genius of Unitarianism was fundamentally out of harmony with traditional and popular Christianity. This, for the first time, was most conspicuously evident when, in July of 1838, Mr. Emerson addressed the graduating class of Harvard Divinity School. This address, on account of its unusually frank criticism of the traditional views of the "Divine Nature, Jesus, Christianity and of the offices of the churches," started a controversy within Unitarianism which was destined not to end until the "traditional" views were practically eliminated. Great impetus was added to this controversy and a division seemed to threaten, when Theodore Parker spoke on "the transient and permanent in Christianity" on May 19, 1841. This was further expounded in the following winter in a series of five lectures which he published under the title of a "Discourse of Matters Pertaining to Religion." So acrimonious became the dis-

cussion that many of Parker's fellow Unitarian ministers hesitated to call him a Christian. The central principle of Unitarianism which from the first had been the right of private interpretation and freedom of speech was strong enough, however, to prevent any serious rupture. A few years later the right of a man to think his own thoughts and to speak them in religious matters became something of an issue through the attitude of the Boston Association of Ministers toward Theodore Parker. His frank departure from traditional beliefs and customs prompted the more conservative members of the denomination to scrutinize closely the beliefs of the young men coming into the ministry, and to create an atmosphere uncomfortable to too advanced thinkers.

The Western Conference

The men of the Middle West, while not taking sides in the doctrinal controversy which Emerson and Parker had precipitated, felt there was a distinct menace to freedom of thought and expression in the attitude taken toward Dr. Parker and so when these men of the Middle West organized in 1852 the Western Conference they were stoutly resolved to preserve the right of men to think and speak as they believed. In the following year, in giving advice to the missionaries of the conference, it was stated that under no circumstances should they require "subscription to any human creed, or the wearing of any distinctive name." With the denominational reawakening which came after the Civil War the question of the basis of fellowship became an issue.

The National Conference

In 1865 the National, now the General Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, meeting biennially, was organized and the basis of fellowship although very broad was considered too narrow by some of the more radical, who thereupon organized the Free Religious Association. These conflicts came to an end by the action (1894) of the National Conference in adopting the present preamble to the constitution of that body. That is, Unitarians decided once and for all that within organized Unitarianism there should be absolute freedom of thought and expression. The constitution of the General Conference reads: "These churches accept the religion of Jesus holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man . . . we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and practical aims." With this jealous insistence upon freedom of thought and speech for every individual, Unitarianism, or rather the Unitarian churches have gone along associating themselves together in an increasingly effective organization. Lacking a central authority to compel obedience the Unitarian body lacks the driving power essential to conspicuously successful propaganda. Unitarianism can only appeal to those who are thinking in its direction.

American Unitarian Association

The character and aim of the organized activities of the denomination are evidenced by the various departments into which the American Unitarian As-

sociation (Boston, Mass.), the executive branch of the denomination, is divided. The publication department, besides printing and publishing books of a more or less denominational character, aids in the work of Unitarian propaganda by printing and distributing tracts to the number of about 400,000 copies annually, while the publicity department "has for its special work the diffusion of Unitarian principles through the medium of the press." The department of comity and fellowship "has jurisdiction over matters connected with inter-denominational interests and seeks to substitute co-operation for competitive methods in church work." There is also a department of church extension and a department of community service. The latter aims "to promote in the churches a study of social problems," and "to cultivate closer and more sympathetic relations between the churches and the wage earners." The committee on New Americans is engaged in missionary work and establishing churches among Americans of foreign birth and speech. The department of religious education seeks "to correlate and vitalize the endeavors of the denominational Sunday schools." It issues manuals and lesson helps, conducts Sunday school institutes, provides lecture courses for teachers and aims to introduce and encourage modern methods in religious education in the Unitarian churches.

Foreign Relations

There is a department of foreign relations, not foreign missions. The following quotation expresses the denominational attitude: "Foreign missions have never commanded a general interest

on the part of Unitarians. Their dislike of the proselyting spirit, their intense love of liberty for others as well as themselves, and the absence of sectarian feeling have combined to make them, as a body, indifferent to the propagation of their faith in other countries. They have done something, however, to express their sympathy with those of kindred faith in foreign lands." As early as 1824 the Unitarians of America took a lively interest in the Hindoo leader Rammohun Roy, who had "adopted Unitarianism," and also in the work of the Rev. William Adam, a Baptist missionary, who had become converted to Unitarianism in India and in 1826 joined with the English Unitarians in a plan to send a sum of money yearly to aid the work there of the British Indian Unitarian Association. In 1853 the Rev. Charles H. A. Dall was sent from this country to Calcutta, where he devoted himself to the work of education rather than of preaching. He founded the Calcutta School of Industrial Art, the Useful Arts' School, the Hindoo Girls' School as well as a school for the waifs of the streets. "His influence was especially felt in the education of girls and in industrial training, in both of which directions he was a pioneer." Since the death of Mr. Dall the aid given India has been through the natives themselves, particularly through the Brahmo-Somaj, which has societies and houses of prayer all over India, and is engaged in religious, educational and reformatory work. In 1884 Yukichi Fukuzawa started a movement in his country, Japan, looking "to the introduction of a rational Christianity." In response to an urgent request from Japanese the Rev. Arthur M. Knapp was sent to

Japan in 1889 to investigate, and later in that year Mr. Knapp was prepared to begin work. In defining the purpose of his mission Mr. Knapp said, "receive us not as theological propagandists, but as messengers of the new gospel of human brotherhood in the religion of man." The work of Mr. Knapp and his colleagues was wholly educational. "No churches were organized by the representative of the American Unitarian Association. Those that have come into existence have been wholly at the initiative of the natives themselves." In 1896 was organized the Japanese Unitarian Association, which, through the co-operation of influential and scholarly Japanese, is helping to liberalize religious thought throughout the country in both the Buddhist and Christian communions. In Italy the Unitarian work is carried on by the Association of Free Believers. A Unitarian association has been organized in Brazil by Brazilians, and movements Unitarian in everything but name are to be found in Switzerland, Holland, Norway and Denmark. There are Unitarian churches in the English-speaking countries, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand.

Churches, Schools, Periodicals

In the United States and Canada to-day there are about 475 churches and missions. Although the census of the membership of these churches is given in various publications as a matter of fact there is no official census of Unitarian membership. This is due to the fact that usually Unitarian ministers have little interest in church membership. Unitarian ministers are educated at the divinity school of Harvard University, which school "was founded

and endowed by Unitarians"; the Meadville Theological School, Meadville, Pa.; the Pacific Unitarian School for the Ministry, Berkeley, Cal. *The Christian Register; Unitarian Word and Work,* Boston, Mass., are the leading denominational periodicals.

What Unitarians Believe

Popularly a Unitarian is one who does not believe in "the divinity of Christ," or more correctly in the deity of Christ. That is but another way of saying that Unitarians do not believe in the Trinitarian formula expressed in the Athanasian and Nicean creeds and embodied in all Protestant orthodox creeds. Because of this lack of belief in the Trinity, Unitarians are classified in the United States Religious Census as "non-evangelical," and are usually officially classified by the "Evangelical" bodies as non-Christian. This latter classification was very definitely made at the organization of the Federation of the Christian Churches of America in 1905. This officially representative body of "Evangelical" churches decided that to qualify as a "Christian" church there must be a complete acceptance of the Trinitarian formula. Unitarians decline to accept that decision and emphatically insist that it is not necessary to be a Trinitarian in order to be a Christian. To support this contention they point out that, so far as is known, Jesus himself did not teach the doctrine of the Trinity, neither did the Apostles. The only passage in New Testament literature which in any way reflects or embodies the Trinitarian formula is that in 1 John v, 7, so plainly an interpolation that it is dropped from the Revised Version without any comment. They also point

out that it was at least 150 years after the crucifixion of Jesus before the term Trinity began to be used by Christian teachers, and it was considerably later than this before the Trinitarian formula was decided on as the Christian conception of deity. Unitarians hold that this doctrine, instead of coming from anything Jesus or the Apostles or their immediate successors taught, is altogether of heathen origin, though this is not necessarily anything against it. So they argue that in rejecting the Trinitarian formula and insisting on a pure monotheism they follow much more closely the teachings of Jesus than do the Trinitarians. For this reason they insist that they are entitled to be regarded as Christian. However, Unitarians care little for a *name*. The important thing is to be Christian in spirit. They always speak of themselves as Christians. "But," as Dr. Lowe expressed it when the wisdom of adopting the name as a part of the official title of the national organization was being thoroughly debated, "I will oppose, as a test (of fellowship), any *definition* of Christianity." That was designed to indicate that Unitarians regarded Christianity, not as a set of definitions of God and Christ, but rather the Christ spirit which a man is under obligation to put into his every-day life.

A Definite Belief

Unitarians have no creed, no *official* theology. They have "statements" of faith. The most popular being: "The Fatherhood of God; the Brotherhood of man; the Leadership of Jesus; salvation by character; the progress of mankind onward and upward forever."

But this is in no sense final or authoritative, it is simply an attempt to set forth the things most commonly believed. There are forms for admission into Unitarian church-membership, but in no case is any sort of doctrinal test imposed or implied. This arises not from any lack of religious belief or conviction among Unitarians, but, first, because they hold that belief in and frequent recital of a creed does not necessarily make a person Christian or even religious; secondly, guided by experience, Unitarians feel very strongly that no church or council ought or has any right to require any person to commit himself for all time to some particular form of worship, or sacraments or dogmas no matter how true they seem to be. They are not willing to accept as spiritual guides men who had so imperfect an understanding of the world they lived in as did the makers of Christian creeds. Believing in the spiritual imperfection of all persons and institutions, past as well as present, Unitarians feel that creeds and sacraments which change not make it impossible or unnecessarily difficult to press forward to a finer spiritual quality in life. Believing as they do that man is a progressively spiritual being in this world, they insist that the last word in religious truth has not been uttered and the goal of spiritual endeavor is still far ahead. For this reason Unitarians refuse to have anything to do with finalties and infallibilities in religion.

There is nevertheless a Unitarian faith which binds Unitarians together in a common purpose and a sort of common understanding of religious matters. It has been expressed thus: "Just as an association of scientists is constituted and sustained not

by the adoption of a theory, however certain, but by a common purpose or aim, so a church is possible by virtue of the common purpose to seek contact with the divine life and to find mutual expression of the experience." Although Unitarians are free to formulate each his own conclusion there runs through all the consequent diversity of opinion strands of a common faith and on all great religious issues there is among them a quite strong agreement. There is space for only a few brief hints on this point.

Belief About God

Unitarians are very modest when it comes to speaking of the Infinite Spirit "in whom we live and move and have our being." To believe in, to have a lively consciousness of God, they do not consider it needful to assume a detailed familiarity. They shrink from frequent repetition of the name and also from using any word or phrase that suggests an anthropomorphic conception. Unitarians most commonly speak of God as Father, not because that is an adequate or exact term, but because it suggests the finest, the most universal, the most unselfish elements a man can conceive of or aspire to. Perhaps the term is generally used by them because it suggests that this overshadowing, transfusing spirit is all the time prompting, tempting man to grow up into the divine likeness, just as the noblest of human fathers prompts his child to grow up in the likeness of the father's noblest self. Whether a distinct personality shall be ascribed to the idea of the Divine Fatherhood is a matter which each must decide for himself. They incline to the belief

that a definite idea about God cannot be communicated from one to the other by a series of words or by a formula as is a law of science or a principle in mathematics, but that the idea must come from one's intuitive or acquired understanding. In thinking and speaking of God Unitarians are guided by the revelations of science no matter how recent, because they hold that if God is the living principle in things, that spirit which seems to be forever shaping the world of human life toward ever finer issues, then plainly a more accurate understanding of the Divine Spirit will come with every new discovery, every step toward the ultimate truth of things. Unitarians prefer to speak of their *thought of God* rather than of a *belief in God*, for the reason that the former phrase indicates that God is becoming more clearly revealed and that future generations will know more than is yet known concerning the Divine Spirit. While Unitarians do not believe it possible to express their thought or consciousness of God in a phrase there are two Biblical utterances which they frequently quote as expressing their idea. "Hear O Israel: the Lord our God is One Lord" (Deut. vi, 4) and "God is Spirit and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth" (John iv, 24).

Belief About Jesus

The Unitarian idea of Jesus is that he is in all respects a human being. They hold that the idea that Jesus was "a man and something more" makes his "life of singular purity, elevation, courage, sanity and devotion" worthless as an example to beings who are *only men*. Also a Christ "conceived

of the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary" adds no distinction or force to anything Jesus said or did or was. That idea simply makes him one of many mythological beings which form the centre of many religions. Unitarians contend that the Christ of miraculous birth is not the historical figure of the Gospels, but an imaginary being created by theologians, in the days when there was no knowledge of science or history, for the purpose of meeting the necessities of a very elaborate scheme of saving man from "the wrath to come." They insist, without any sort of reservation that Jesus was an historical person; that he was the son of Joseph and Mary. This they set forth not as a dogma but as belief imposed upon them by such facts as are known. They point out that while there are great and irreconcilable differences between the two New Testament stories of Jesus' birth, the only two Gospel narratives that include these stories fully agree in regarding Jesus as the son of Joseph. Thus in the genealogies, Matt. i, 2-6 and Luke iii, 23 ff, the lineage of Jesus is traced through the male line, the author of Luke iii, 23, going so far as to say that Jesus "was, as people supposed, the son of Joseph." Then there is the testimony of Hertullian (cir. A.D. 200) that at that period "the common people think of Christ as a man." The Unitarians accept the verdict of history that Jesus was a man. They agree that he may have manifested an unusual degree of divinity or godlikeness—divinity as they understand it refers to the quality of a person's character and not to the nature of the body — that he may have possessed unusual spiritual gifts and psychical powers but they hold this does not war-

rant them in regarding him as being other than human. There is no disposition among Unitarians to take each and every idea ascribed by the Gospel writers to Jesus and attribute something like infallible authority to such ideas. It is less the words of Jesus than the spirit he put into all his deeds and relationships which they revere and accept as constituting the "leadership of Jesus." Unitarians hold that the abiding and growing influence of Jesus upon the world proceeds from the excellency of his manhood. His name is an increasing inspiration because he himself was man enough to stand for wonderfully fine ideals of life in this world and abated not one jot of his devotion to those ideals even when the cross was the penalty for such devotion. The popular idea that Jesus died on the cross as a divine sacrifice finds no place in Unitarian belief. He is Leader rather than Saviour. Instead of believing that by his death he opens the way to a heaven above they believe that the ethical principles according to which Jesus lived point the way whereby man may make this world heavenly. Because the life of Jesus was a *man's* life, his gospel a *man's* gospel, Unitarians insist that it is a gospel which every man can and ought to live.

Belief About Salvation

Unitarians believe in salvation as a purely human act, involving only human powers, the results of which are effective in changing the character of a man's life here in this world. A salvation which aims to bring about a change in the sentence which a "supreme judge" has already pronounced against the soul of a man, a salvation which seeks to save

one from terrible penalties inflicted for eternity beyond the tomb, does not appeal to Unitarians as being helpful or in accord with the facts. They reject the idea that sin is purely or primarily an offence against God. Sin is moral and not theological in its nature. They cannot see how there is any sin in a man's disbelieving any or all the doctrines embodied in the church creeds. It may be indefensible to refuse to belong to a church and to participate in the great sacraments, but they decline to regard this as a violation of the moral law. According to their idea sin is wrong more or less deliberately committed by one person against another. Any word or thought or sentiment or deed which in any way works against moral and spiritual well-being, that is sin. From this it follows that the first and only step which a person can take toward salvation is not merely to strive to right the wrong but to so change himself and his plan of life that he will henceforth do right and desire and plan only to do right. Consequently Unitarians cannot think of salvation as a means of escaping the consequences of sin. A man must accept the consequences of his words, of his thoughts, of his deeds. From this there is no possible escape and ought not to be. A man enters the path of salvation only when he refuses to do or think or speak evil. And this every man, in a greater or less degree, is capable of doing. Unitarians reject the prevalent belief that man is *unable* to save himself, and so must needs plead his helplessness before a great supernatural saviour. They hold that by a continual struggle to master temptations and provocations from within and without a man can, and in no other way can he,

become a *saved* man. In their judgment salvation is seldom a completed act. Few if any are wholly saved. The degree of salvation which a person enjoys is the measure of his triumph over injustice, greed, hatred and the thousand and one evils which beset a man in the world. In so far as ritual acts or belief in supernatural influence spur a man to righteous endeavor such play a part in his salvation. There is, so Unitarians believe, the power of salvation within every person. Every effort which a person makes toward rightness of life is this saving power in operation. The purpose of salvation, as Unitarians conceive it, is not to secure a place in a heaven beyond, but to secure an ever-increasing measure of heaven-likeness here.

Belief About the Future Life

What Unitarians believe concerning the future can easily be inferred from this. The idea of a "heavenly city" above and a "bottomless pit" below is dismissed by them as without warrant of fact; it has not even symbolic value. They have a "great hope" of future existence, but they stop short of expressing any definite knowledge concerning the *what* or the *where* of such existence. They hold as a hope, with some it is quite a positive belief, that the future can be nothing other than a continuance of this life. Unitarians generally feel quite sure that, whatever happens after death, the soul that has lived its years on earth in sin will not, as a reward for certain theological beliefs, enter into a state of perfect bliss and holiness, neither will such a soul because of lack of such beliefs enter into a pit or state of horror and despair from

which there is no escape. There is no great gulf of difference separating the future from the present. The soul passes on with all the character it has won on earth unchanged. The idea of a soul being sentenced eternally to happiness or misery is rejected by Unitarians as being utterly unjust. Death does not determine the soul's character for all eternity. Death is not doom. If the soul lives on it is the belief of Unitarians that its continued existence must be amid conditions which allow of unceasing progress toward perfection or constant deterioration, as each soul shall elect. In the *life that is to be* as well as in *the life that now is* the soul must reap what it sows. An eminent Unitarian scholar well expresses the general Unitarian attitude in these words: "The doctrine of immortality is one in which Unitarians do not take a very acute interest. Their respect for human nature — their conviction as to the imperativeness of the moral law, their profound faith in the goodness of the earthly life as a part of the goodness of all life rightly understood — all these combine to fix their attention rather on this life than on the life after death."

Belief About the Bible

The manner of compiling the existing canon of the Bible coupled with the fact that the men engaged in the task did not know more than the scholars of to-day makes it impossible for Unitarians to accept the belief that this book is God's inspired and infallible Word. The fact that there are in other religions scriptures believed to be inspired by deity and infallible takes from the idea that the Bible is a sacred book whatever distinction and au-

thority such an idea is supposed to possess. Unitarians, however, hold the Bible in high esteem. They treasure it as one of the great, perhaps the greatest of the religious books of the world. And though they concede that it speaks with authority on some matters it is only the authority of the man who sees clearly and speaks accurately. So an utterance which has authority in the Bible would have no less authority if found in any other book. Nor is a thing true or *more* true because it is in the Bible. Whether in the Bible or out of it a thing is true only to the degree that it squares with knowledge and experience. To Unitarians the Bible is an inspiration, never a finality. It is read from Unitarian pulpits party from custom, but most of all because it contains many passages of surpassing ethical beauty and inspiration, and usually only such passages are read. They use it in their Sunday schools because it deals with the history of a great people, and largely because it discloses the sources and character of many religious, political, ritualistic and ethical ideas which have shaped and directed Christian civilization. But Unitarians never lose sight of the fact that the Bible is distinctly a Hebrew rather than a Christian production. But that fact does not detract from nor add to its ethical and spiritual excellencies. From these excellencies Unitarians will continue to draw ethical and spiritual encouragement and illumination.

Idea of the Church

The Church according to the Unitarian understanding of things is a purely human institution. With all due respect to its traditions and appre-

ciative of the good it has helped man to achieve, and wholly mindful of what in the way of spiritual comfort and strength it has been and is to many, Unitarians cannot ignore what seem so plainly to them to be the facts that the Church within Christianity is comprised of a series of churches each maintaining a separate existence by the imposition of fairly definite rules of exclusion. The idea that some one Church is the one and only true church does not seem to be warranted. Nor does the idea that there is somewhere within, behind, above existing churches a sort of true, mystic church of the Spirit, which will some day be established, appeal to them as having any force of truth. The Church is simply an organization of man's religious interests. The institution, no matter what its traditions and claims and forms, can have no authority above that which proceeds naturally from the intellectual and spiritual attainments of the persons composing it. Like every other institution it has a right to require that those seeking admission shall go through certain forms and pass a satisfactory examination on matters of belief, but to offer eternal rewards or pronounce eternal doom is wholly beyond its right and power. To belong to a church cannot secure any one a privileged position after death. The Church is a saving and righteous force in a community when and only to the extent that its members are living examples of purest and noblest character.

Baptism and the Lord's Supper

The rites of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are observed in many Unitarian churches, but Unitarians do not retain the old belief in these mat-

ters. They attach no serious importance to them. The idea that immersion or sprinkling or signing with the cross with water upon adults or babes can effect any spiritual regeneration or in any way change the relation between a human being and deity is rejected. Ritual or Sacrament can, in their judgment, possess no saving power. In Unitarian practice "baptism" is generally spoken of as "consecration." The purpose of the service of consecration of children is to express the parents' desire that the children shall grow up into purity of life and nobility of service. The same idea is carried out in the consecration of those of "riper years." It is a consecration of life "to God and his truth and to the service of your fellowmen." The observance of the Lord's Supper is found only in the older Unitarian churches, and in these its observance tends to gradually disappear. Where it is most regularly observed the sacramental idea is wholly eliminated. The form is retained as is some of the old phraseology which conveys the ancient belief that the communicants are partaking of a sacrifice, but the idea is wholly foreign to Unitarian thought. What Unitarians have in mind is in the nature of a memorial service recalling the life of the Master. The tendency to abandon it altogether is due to the fact that it is exceedingly difficult to avoid being misunderstood. An ancient ritual is a poor medium through which to convey modern ideas. The idea that great spiritual merits are obtained by this or any sacrament is not accepted by Unitarians, but they believe that in so far as observing the Lord's Supper inspires a passionate love of the character and work of Jesus it is good.

The one purpose of real religion, Unitarians believe, is not to prepare people for another life, but to inspire them to live this as it ought to be lived. This explains why Unitarians have been most conspicuous in all enterprises which aim to improve the general well-being, morally, intellectually and even materially. Thus it happens that in an unusually large number of instances Unitarians have been pioneers in philanthropic and educational enterprises and have been pre-eminent in literature. A few instances may be quoted. The founder of the Perkins Institute for the Blind in Boston, a pioneer movement, was Dr. Samuel G. Howe, and to Dorothea Dix must be given credit for starting the movement which resulted in a more humane treatment of those in prisons, in almshouses and hospitals for the insane. A Unitarian layman, Henry Bergh, was the founder of the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The first woman advocate of the "rights of women" in the United States, Margaret Fuller, was a Unitarian, and conspicuous in this movement have been such women as Julia Ward Howe, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony, all of them Unitarians. Horace Mann, pioneer in educational reform, was a Unitarian layman, and Henry Barnard writes that "had it not been for Cyrus Peirce (Unitarian minister) I consider the cause of Normal schools would have failed or been postponed for an indefinite period." Peter Cooper, founder of Cooper Union in New York City, was an earnest Unitarian. The first library in the United States that was free to all the inhabitants of a town or city was opened in Dublin, N. H., by the

Unitarian minister of that place, the Rev. L. W. Leonard; and in the adjoining town of Peterborough, under the leadership of the Unitarian minister, the Rev. Abiel Abbott, the people voted to tax themselves to maintain a library — the first library in the country supported from the tax rate of a municipality. The United States Sanitary Commission, which did such splendid service in the Civil War, was originated by the Rev. Henry W. Bellows, minister of the Unitarian Church of All Souls in New York City. This devotion to humanitarian work is not accidental, it is Unitarian religion, and in their churches emphasis has been and is always put upon the religion of service, making the most and the best of this life.

Fruits of Unitarian Christianity

This goes to explain how it comes to pass that Unitarians have been so conspicuous in literature, statesmanship, in the judiciary and elsewhere. The Unitarian representation in literature is out of all proportion to the size of the denomination. In American literature Unitarians are represented by Henry W. Longfellow, Oliver Wendell Holmes, Ralph Waldo Emerson, James Russell Lowell, William Cullen Bryant, Bayard Taylor, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Thomas Wentworth Higginson, William D. Howells, Bret Harte, Louise M. Alcott. Among historians, Bancroft, Prescott, Motley and Parkman might be mentioned. Thomas Jefferson was an outspoken advocate of Unitarianism. John Adams and John Q. Adams, Millard Fillmore and William H. Taft are among the men of this faith who have occupied the Presidency of the United States. John

Marshall, Charles Sumner and Daniel Webster were also Unitarian laymen. The list is a long one and is referred to only to indicate the character of Unitarianism through the type of men and women who have been identified with it.

Unitarian contributions to hymnology are out of all proportion to the size of the denomination, and the quality of those contributions is second to none. The catholicity of their spirit and the excellence of their devotional and spiritual character are evident from the wide approval which many Unitarian hymns have received. There is hardly a hymn book of importance which does not contain a number.

Bibliography

The material for this subject is voluminous, particularly on the subject of Unitarian belief. There is no one formal statement which has more authority than another. The American Unitarian Association publishes a large number of free tracts and many books which cover not only the doctrines but also the history and the lives of the great leaders in the progress of liberal Christianity.

THE American Unitarian Association is the working missionary organization of the Unitarian churches of America. It seeks to promote sympathy and united action among Liberal Christians, and to spread the principles which are believed by Unitarians to be essential to civil and religious liberty and progress and to the attainments of the spiritual life. To this end it supports missionaries, establishes and maintains churches, holds conventions, aids in building meeting-houses, publishes, sells and gives away books, sermons, tracts, hymn-books, and devotional works.

A list of free tracts will be sent on application. A full descriptive catalogue of the publications of the Association, including doctrinal, devotional and practical works, will be sent to all who apply.

The Association is supported by the voluntary contributions of churches and individuals.

There are two forms of membership in this Association provided for those who desire to cooperate in the spread of liberal religious thought and influence:

I. *Life Membership.* Any individual may, by the payment of $50, become a *Life Member* of the American Unitarian Association Such a person is entitled to vote at all business meetings, to receive the Year Book and Annual Report and, by means of frequent communications, is kept in touch with the various enterprises promoted by the Association.

II. *Associate Membership.* Other individuals desiring to affiliate with the Association may become *Associate Members* by signing an application card (sent upon request) and the payment of $1.00. As such they will receive a certificate of *Associate Membership,* each new pamphlet as it is issued, and other communications from Headquarters, and upon the additional payment of 50 cents, a year's subscription to *Unitarian Word and Work,* the monthly magazine reporting denominational news.

Address communications and contributions to the

American Unitarian Association

25 BEACON STREET BOSTON, MASS.

[No. 302]

FROM AUTHORITY TO FREEDOM IN RELIGION

The Religious Tendencies of our Time as Shown in Recent Biographies

BY

JOHN M. WILSON

PUBLISHED FOR FREE DISTRIBUTION

AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION

25 BEACON STREET, BOSTON, MASS.

The American Unitarian Association was Founded in 1825 with the Following Expressed Purpose

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(The General Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, passed the following vote at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man."

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

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FROM AUTHORITY TO FREEDOM IN RELIGION

There are abundant signs of variation and change in the theology of the Protestant churches. The sharpness of conflict between so-called Fundamentalism and Modernism is merely a witness to the activity and influence of contrasted tendencies that have long been apparent, and have served as tests of individuals and groups within the churches. The interest in these matters is due to a realization on the part of the loyal adherents of these contrasted schools of thought that there is an irrepressible conflict between them. A distinguished clergyman of the Presbyterian body, Dr. William Pierson Merrill, entitles an article in a recent magazine, *Protestantism at the Crossroads,* showing in the title itself his conviction that a division already exists in the Protestant churches. In this article he calls for a clear understanding of the issue. He says there is ample room for two kinds of churches, but that no church can serve two masters, professing to trust in freedom and yet clinging to the emblems and assumptions of authority. "Protestantism has held too much to the Catholic idea of authority, substituting an inerrant book for an inerrant church. Protestantism has held too much to the Catholic idea of Faith as a Deposit, substituting many varying declarations for the one authorized belief of Catholicism." Dr. Merrill calls upon Protestantism to give up external authority and trust in the spirit, since Faith is *not a deposit but an adventure, and religion is a way of life rather than a formula of belief.*

This is unquestionably the issue. Shall we choose the way of authority or the way of freedom in religion? Shall a man attach himself in religious matters to some centre or instrument of authority, to which he entrusts himself for guidance without question, finding peace and certainty in the surrender of his personal right of judgment and inquiry, or shall he adopt the principle of faith as an adventure, a seeking after truth, and a consecration to a way of life?

I propose to review some of the recently published biographies and autobiographies of men recognized as leaders of Christian thought and life. Their evidence will help us to discern the signs of the times. What choice did they make when they came to the crossroads? What tendencies are discernible in their intellectual and spiritual experiences? Through what processes of thought have they been led? To what results have they been guided?

On the thirtieth anniversary of his consecration as Bishop of Massachusetts, Rt. Rev. William Lawrence gave an address entitled, *Fifty Years,* sketching the movement of his thought and faith for a half century, as theological student, priest, and Bishop of the Protestant Episcopal Church. When he started for the theological school in 1873 he had the customary beliefs of his church at that period. These included the doctrine of a Bible inspired and true in word and letter. Therefore the world was created in six days and in the year 4004 B. C. for that was the annotation on the margin of the family Bible. He accepted all the miracle

stories as true, and he had been taught to think that doubt regarding them made one liable to damnation. To be sure, there was a loving heavenly Father, and the boy Jesus, and the Savior on the Cross, but these did not seem to fit into the scheme of belief.

The questions that young people of that day were asking about the inconsistencies of statement in the Bible, and the revelations of science, and the evasive answers that parents and ministers gave, led young Lawrence to the assumption that there were two worlds, one of everyday where answers were straight, and the other a religious realm where faith made havoc of common honesty. The young student found himself in general sympathy with the scientific habit of mind. "Seek the truth and the truth will make you free," became his motto, and from that time the conviction that God was a Spirit guiding on to Truth brought him serenity. He definitely abandoned the external authority of the Bible for a trust in the spirit of truth. He judged the best defence of the Faith to be in seeking and standing for the Truth and living in the Spirit of Christ.

The doctrine of the inerrancy of the Scriptures had received its death blow in Lawrence's mind, even before the historical and literary criticism of the Bible made it an impossible belief. The famous "Essays and Reviews" published by a group of Anglican clergy and scholars in 1861 had done much to affect opinion about the Bible. The first essay by young Frederick Temple, "The Education of the World," overthrew the orthodox conception of the Old Testament books, and showed them to be human fallible documents. There was a demand by Bishop Wilberforce that all the essayists be compelled to

withdraw from the ministry, but this very Frederick Temple afterwards became Archbishop of Canterbury. Then criticism dealt with the New Testament and these books were also disclosed to the popular mind as human and to be judged as other books.

Bishop Lawrence then describes how the thought of God changed from that of an Autocrat far off in the heavens to that of a Heavenly Father immanent in us and whose Spirit transfigures us. "Some thirty years ago, I was convinced that there is no essential connection between the belief in the Virgin Birth and a belief in the Incarnation. Since my first canonical examinations, as Bishop, I have never asked my candidates their position on that point. Personally I cannot but feel that the church is today placing undue confidence in her emphasis upon formal creeds and their recital. Religion is in the personal communion of God and man. The Christian religion is that communion expressed through loyalty and devotion to Jesus Christ. What I want to bring out is that the spiritual and moral emphasis has a place, and to my mind, a higher place, than that of doctrine in the standards of the church."

These statements are of great significance since they are made by one who has done splendid work for the Episcopal Church and whose loyalty and consecration to his calling and to the church are notable and beyond all question. Bishop Lawrence hopes to make the church far more effective for truth and righteousness by bringing it into better accord with science and human experience and needs.

Dr. William S. Rainsford, another distinguished Episcopalian, born in Ireland, the same year as Bishop Lawrence (1850) now living retired from active work, has written his autobiography under the title, *The Story of a Varied Life.* It is an entertaining and stimulating book that brings us into contact with a big wholesome personality. He was the son of a prominent Anglican rector settled in Ireland. After his education for the church Rainsford came to this country as a missioner or evangelist and finally became rector of St. George's Church in New York City which he made into one of the great parishes of the country. He was surcharged with energy and exhausted his abounding strength in the service of his church and people. From the first his mind was adjusting itself to new truth acquired by study and experience. "I have changed radically in many of my beliefs, moral, social, religious, and I have not done changing." He comments on Emerson's words:—"God offers to every mind its choice between truth and repose. Take which you please—you can never have both. Between these, as a pendulum, man oscillates. He in whom the love of repose predominates will accept the first creed, the first philosophy—most likely his father's. He gets rest, commodity, and reputation; but he shuts the door of truth. He in whom the love of truth predominates will keep himself from all moorings and afloat. He will abstain from dogmatism, and recognize all the opposite negations between which, as walls, his being is swung. He submits to the inconvenience of suspense and imperfect opinion, but he is a candidate for truth,

as the other is not, and respects the highest law of his being."

Dr. Rainsford says, "I did ever try to be a candidate for truth," for change and renewal are our life and the creeds of manhood are no more the creeds of boyhood than the body at sixty is the same as at twenty-one. His nature made him reflect the changes that he saw and felt in the world around him. Regarding the Virgin Birth he can only think that it is a myth to explain and justify the unique goodness and greatness of Jesus. It makes an unreal Jesus, to his thinking. Jesus certainly shared the beliefs of his time, he believed in the nearness of his second coming, as Paul did, and both were mistaken. *"By so much as Jesus is pronounced to be supernatural, by his birth, or death, or rising from the dead, by so much are we robbed of our Elder Brother, robbed of a real son of man who is a practical guide and example; one we can follow and imitate down here on earth."* (These words Dr. Rainsford italicises.) Men seek an inerrant authority, so they fashion a supernatural Jesus. But Jesus refused this station. What he claimed was that the spirit of his Father God, which inspired him, would continue to lead into new truth those who followed him. Dr. Rainsford had a strong attraction for crowds of hearers everywhere and he says:—"The chief value of my preaching was that I tried and kept trying to recast, restate, the church's orthodox doctrines. For such restatement intelligent lay people were everywhere hungry, and to satisfy that hunger I did my best, and more than any other quality this drew the people to me. God of the supernatural must be replaced by God of the eternal

order. Man's religious beliefs are as truly and directly an evolution as is his body. No God of favoritism or partiality, no God merely or chiefly of nature, is worshipful. The only way I know of loving God is loving men. The supreme wonder of life is man himself—man, a little child of God. To realize the greatness of ourselves is not to minify God but to magnify Him. The church is holding back from reinterpretation of all her doctrines that an acceptance of evolution must involve. *She must face this reinterpretation.*"

The *Confessions of an Old Priest* is the spiritual autobiography of Dr. S. D. McConnell, another leading minister of the Episcopal Church, author of a history of the American Episcopal Church, and rector of several of the most important churches of that body in Philadelphia and New York. He was born in 1846 and is now living in retirement and has made use of his leisure to tell the story of his mental and spiritual life, recording the changes in his faith. It is interesting to note that Dr. McConnell takes a motto from Amiel's Journal.

"My creed has melted away, but I believe in good, in the moral order, and in salvation; religion is for me to live and die in God, in complete abandonment to the holy will which is the root of nature and destiny. I believe in the Gospel, the Good News, that is to say, faith in the love of a pardoning Father."

These *Confessions* disclose a franker and fuller departure from the creeds of the church than that of any of his colleagues and contemporaries already considered. Amiel's words, "My creed has melted

away," are not an overstatement of Dr. O'Connell's position. For he is convinced that all dogmas rest upon the same authority and the infraction of any one of them breaks the binding force of the authority itself. Does the divinity of Christ rest on any different foundation from the inspiration of the Scriptures, or the dogma of the Trinity from that of a personal Devil? Is the resurrection of Jesus any more credible than the speaking with tongues at Pentecost? Even the possession of an exalted ideal of life is not a distinctive trait of Christianity, for other religions have this feature also. But the miraculous set of facts, the concrete events associated with the origin of Christianity and which form the sanction and warrant of its ideal of life are no longer credible. He says, "I was for twenty years a champion of creeds in the warfare of religion and science. But when the controversy died down I had an uneasy feeling that though my side was victorious the enemy seemed unconcerned about it all. I knew what Cardinal Newman meant when he said:—'My quarrel was with liberalism, and by liberalism I mean the anti-dogmatic spirit and its development. It is not now a party, it is the whole educated world.' "

There is no contemporary witness for Jesus. Miracles are not only intellectually incredible but belief in them is ethically debauching. Christianity moves amid miracles and prodigies; from making an axhead to swim up to raising Lazarus from the dead. Now miracles are outside nature and evidence is a process within the course of nature, so that evidence has nothing to say for or versus miracles. So our author goes on to assert that "miracles do not hap-

pen, never have happened, and ought not to happen." He emphasizes the moral argument against miracles since they always involve favors to individuals or groups. A God who confers favors is not trustworthy. Interposition in the natural order for the benefit of some one would imply injustice to other men. If God is good miracles do not happen and ought not to happen.

The doctrine of Incarnation presupposes a character out of all relation to time, space, and thought. But Jesus in science, literature, economics, was on the same level with the average man of his time. Even his goodness was limited, for he had no experience as father, citizen, man of business; he lived apart, he had nowhere to lay his head. He gives a rule of life that if one will only trust God, He will deal with him as a parent does with a helpless child. The mendicant friar more nearly reproduces the life of Jesus than any other man living. Moreover his tragic end made him realize that his trustful confidence in God had misled him. How else explain the cry:—"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

So in Dr. McConnell's view there is no place for the miraculous and no warrant for the dogmas of the church he served so long and faithfully. Each man's reason enlightened by reflection, learning, and experience, is the sole judge of truth, and there is no authority in the church which is other than truth itself so far as the church sees it and teaches it. But although he is thus completely emancipated from all ideas about external authority for religious truth, and has given up without reserve the doctrines of his church, he is not ready to associate with

outspoken religious liberals, for they, he feels, do not sufficiently recognize the sacramental and emotional needs of human nature. He believes that the centre of religion is the idea of a Suffering God, and in mystic union with the dying and reviving Savior-God is the soul's life. "The goal to which religion is moving is a Church of a Savior-God, freed from all bondage to history, untrammeled by Scripture, unharassed by definitions, open to all without question who would find solace for their body and soul in symbolic union with the spirit and body of the broken God, 'the promise of all religions, the cry which makes all creeds one.' "

Dr. William Hayes Ward (1835-1916) a Congregational clergyman, and for most of his life editor of The Independent, was a scholar of varied learning and a thinker of acute and discriminating mind. Near the end of his life he wrote, *What I Believe and Why,* giving a general account of the sources and origins, scientific, historical, and personal, of religious belief, but especially dealing with his own experience and conclusions. Though born into the traditional associations of an Orthodox church and trained for its ministry in this record of his intellectual and spiritual evolution, he calls himself frankly a rationalist. "I desire to believe nothing that I do not understand and find a good reason for." So his idea of God comes from what he can conceive an Infinite Being's relation to his creatures would be. Such a Supreme Being would have duties toward us, His creatures, which would be embraced and expressed under the term "loving care," and therefore the best human figure by which

to represent God's relation to his creatures is that of a father, not lord or king.

Dr. Ward discredits the creeds since they are only human fallible standards, formulated by men who did not know as much as we do. "We have more science, more knowledge of history and philosophy than they, and can judge matters of belief better than they." It would be a great saving of thought if everything in the Bible were true. But we know that cannot be so, for the world was not made in six days, and there was no universal flood, and the multiplicity of languages did not originate in Babel, and the second coming of our Lord did not occur in the generation of his contemporaries as the New Testament plainly declares. God did not send a "lying spirit" to deceive Ahab, nor can we believe that they were blessed who dashed the "little ones against the stones." Dr. Ward maintains that it is incredible that a good God would not look with favor on a good man, who tried to live a life of good will to his fellows and of honor toward God; for what doth the Lord require of thee more than these?

To those who ask, "If you deny an infallible Bible what have you left?" his answer is that Christianity is not dependent on an infallible book. Christianity rests on the spiritual truth of the New Testament, on the true conception of God as Father; on love for others as the regnant principle of life; on the Kingdom of God to be created on earth by that love expanding over all Humanity; and historically on the person of Jesus, whose teachings, life, and death, initiated the highest of all religions. But it is his teachings which we must accept, and not any matters of history about him, from his birth to his resur-

rection and ascension. Love affects character, while history correct or incorrect bears only on intelligence. The rule of love is central out of which all duties are evolved. The doctrine, "Thou shalt love the Lord and thy neighbor as thyself" is the patent of Christianity, it is its gift to ethics. Some will see a religious danger in letting go the supreme authority of the written word of God. But truth will prevail and truth will be safe. Whoever has the essence of Christianity, the love of God and man, has an imperishable faith. All else is of minor importance and subject to change and decay.

Dr. Lyman Abbott (1835-1922) was an eminent preacher of the Congregational church, successor to Henry Ward Beecher at Plymouth Church, and editor of The Outlook. He was trained in the strict Calvinistic doctrines, but the year before he died he wrote a book, *What Christianity Means to Me,* which indicates how far he had travelled from the theology of his youth. In the course of his long and fruitful life he had made the complete journey from the religion of authority to the religion of the spirit. In his account of his experience he quotes with approval from the Journal of Amiel. "As I understand it, Christianity is above all religious, and religion is not a method, it is a life, a higher and supernatural life, mystical in its root and practical in its fruits, a communion with God, a calm and deep enthusiasm, a love which radiates, a force which acts, a happiness which overflows. Religion in short is a state of the soul." Dr. Abbott virtually ignores dogmatic theology in this book and where he mentions it he subordinates it to the spir-

itual and practical. He says the Fall of Man has nothing in the Bible to support it except a parable in the Old Testament, and the whole doctrinal scheme of salvation rests on this slight foundation. Jesus was not the founder of a system, but the Giver of Life. Jesus taught men how to live; the churches have taught men what to think. Jesus tested men by their lives; the churches have tested them by their beliefs. The Christian Brotherhood is more than the Church or all the churches. It is founded not on agreement of opinion, not on agreement in forms of worship, not on agreement in form of organization. It is based on love and loyalty to a living Messiah, forever incarnate in the hearts and lives of his disciples. Christianity is the spirit of Christ; the Christian Church is its imperfect embodiment.

Dr. Abbott declares that the fundamental teaching of the prophets of the Old Testament is that God dwells with man and in man. "The word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it." Our approach to God does not depend on any particular form or ceremony but wholly on our sincerity and earnestness. Jesus does not teach about God, he makes us acquainted with God. "Salvation means deliverance from sin, salvation is character. Atonement no longer means that Christ has made a reparation for the wrong I have done, and so God is reconciled to me. It means that Christ by his life and teaching interpreted God to me, and by his presence inspires in me the will to do my Father's will and so has reconciled me to God. Incarnation is not a historic episode but an eternal fact. Love is God knocking. We love God

because He first loved us." This is a kind of mystical liberalism, certainly a religion of the spirit rather than one of dogma and external authority, and Dr. Abbott after having taught it in sermons and books and articles for half a century, and having lived it also, reaffirms it as the tried product of his experience and thought and puts it into his book as a summary of the gathered treasure of a long and eminently useful life.

These five writers are agreed in finding the way of authority, whether of church or book, an unsatisfactory path. They have found freedom better for their minds and spirits. They have trusted in the spirit of truth. Yet no one of them felt obliged to go outside the bounds of his traditional church fellowship. Their new outlook and greater freedom were realized without changing their inherited associations. We now turn to certain examples of these pilgrims of faith who in their pursuit of truth could not rest until they reached a new homeland for their minds and spirits.

Among these the personality that first stands out is the English scholar, man of letters, and preacher, Stopford A. Brooke (1832-1916). His story, as told by his son-in-law, Dr. L. P. Jacks, makes one of the best biographies of the last half century, for it is a notable illustration of the tendencies of the time, and a dramatic contribution to social and religious history. The advance from authority to freedom that Stopford Brooke made, at a loss to himself of fellowship and social standing for a while, and at the sacrifice of all prospects of posi-

tion and power in the Church of England, was caused by two motives. First was the desire to be consistent theologically. His intellectual integrity had obliged him to abandon belief in the doctrine of the incarnation on which the church was based. And morally his position, that of a man who week by week was compelled to declare publicly that he believes what he does not believe, had become positively hateful to him, for he had a horror of sophistry, and a disinclination to use the arguments in justification of such a course that certain of his friends were willing to adopt. His simple statement reveals the integrity of his nature:—"I cannot any longer believe in the miraculous element in Christianity, and I do not think it right to stay on in a church all whose doctrines are built on that element. It seems disloyal to the church and to truth, to God and to myself."

Brooke's secession was a marked loss to progressive tendencies in the Anglican Church, but it was a great gain to those tendencies outside the Church of England. Though he never associated himself formally with any religious body but preached and wrote as an independent, he did come into close contact with the English Unitarians, and substantially aided and encouraged that group. For a number of years after his retirement from the charge of a parish, he preached in the Unitarian churches. He never regretted his departure from the Established Church. In 1907 he wrote:—"I went to the Tate Gallery to see the Turners, and we walked back to Westminster Abbey, and entered and sat in the Nave. I felt regret that I could no longer preach there; but it was no mistake, my leaving the

church. I listened as I stood outside the church," he wrote a little later in his Diary, "**outside the church**—emblem of my position in the religious life of England. But as I read the papers, and see that the Church of England has learnt nothing, but still goes on talking as if certain debatable doctrines are realities, and persuading their world that these inventions are celestial truths, and not the mere rags of the lies that they were of old, when alive and bold they were the tyrants of mankind—I wonder if men will ever, or can ever, distinguish death from life, lies from truth, and the things that endure from those that perish. And I don't regret that I am out of it all, free as the wind on a mountain moor and as alone."

The effect on Brooke of his secession was a liberation of mental, moral, and spiritual energy—his whole nature rushed forward in a fresh outburst of prophetic fire and creative imagination; the years that followed were full of intense and many-sided activity. The note of his preaching was intensely Christian. In the words of Christ he found the doctrine of unconditional self-surrender, whereby the mind was opened to the things of the spirit, and the heart to the love of God. In the person of Christ he saw the figure of humanity realizing an ideal for which the worlds were prepared. His message was essentially the presentation of a vision won through self-forgetfulness, in which earth was shown irradiated with the light of heaven and man in fulfilment of his divine possibilities.

Charles Gordon Ames (1828-1912) was an alert and courageous American who journeyed from the

confines of the Free Baptist Church and its ministry into the frank service of liberal Christianity. By the force of a keen intelligence and a high purpose he made a distinguished career for himself in spite of the limited opportunities of his youth. With hardly any formal education he developed into an able writer, a genial and persuasive editor, and a most effective preacher. He was ten years a minister of the Free Baptist Church and fifty years a Unitarian minister, closing his career with a pastorate of over twenty years in Boston in the Church of the Disciples. *A Spiritual Autobiography* is the narrative of his experiences. It bears witness to the satisfactions of the thoroughly liberal position both to those who win it for themselves and for those who enjoy it as an inheritance.

Dr. Ames tells how great an influence his own experience of fatherhood had upon his theological belief. He writes:—"What would I not do for the sake of that child? The best things in the universe seemed none too good to be sought for him, and from that cradle I longed to see a shining path opened all the way up to infinite glory and blessedness. How did the Heavenly Father regard his helpless earthly children? My love was unmixed with any trace of ill will. My heart might break if my boy should grow up in evil ways; but I never could be his enemy, nor turn against him in permanent anger. Was the Heavenly Father less reasonable to his little ones? Yet I had said to my fellow sinners, 'His anger will burn against you like the heat of ten thousand suns!' I had slandered the Father of mankind whose mercy endureth forever. I had a long conflict over this question of future punish-

ment, but the time came when I could joyfully proclaim that it is not 'a fearful thing to fall into the hands of God.' "

His witness to the advantages of the free position of a broad interpretation of Christianity is clear and emphatic. "I am vastly better satisfied with my work itself, and with its moral and spiritual results in the lives of others since I came into this free and rational method of religion and church life, than I could be when I belonged to the so-called Evangelical school. Much oftener do I hear men and women say, 'This preaching helps my life, it searches my motives, reproves and shames me for wrong-doing; it clears my mind of doubts and questions; it strengthens my heart to do and to endure, to face life and destiny'; they not only say it seems sensible and reasonable, but they say it inspires them with a desire to be good and to do good, and to bring the world into the Kingdom of God."

The successor to Charles Gordon Ames in the pulpit of the Church of the Disciples is (1924) Abraham Mitrie Rihbany, who has given the story of his significant career in *A Far Journey, An Autobiography,* which has been widely read and commended for its charm and interest. Mr. Rihbany was born in Syria and nurtured in the Greek Orthodox Church and came under the influence of Protestantism in a mission school. For a time he was content with his mother Church but began soon to realize that while in sentiment he was Greek Orthodox, intellectually he was becoming Protestant. He questioned the worship of the saints and some of the ceremonials which he saw had no warrant in the Bible, and this

led to arguments with his parents and the priest. He gave up fasting and abstention from meat on certain days which the church required. The priest found him eating meat on a forbidden day, and became angry and violent and young Rihbany told him to leave the house. Not long after Rihbany was received into the Presbyterian Church by an American missionary. For three years he taught in missionary schools and then he made the great adventure of emigrating to this country. He had an eventful life for another three years in this country as editor of a Syrian paper, lecturer, and preacher, being finally a settled minister of a Congregational church. In this last period he was conscious of being "upborne by a spiritual tide high above all creeds and dogmas. For me Christianity shook itself free from all divisive dogmas and appeared as the religion of brotherly love, of trust and salvation, and not of fear and damnation." His pulpit utterances were charged with liberalism. "Every step confirms me in the belief that God's judgments are those of a loving Father, that Christ's mission is to awaken all men to their divine sonship, that religion is life, and salvation spiritual self-fulfilment. I am the grateful child of the whole Church of Christ, regardless of sect and creed. But I am particularly indebted to those communions whose activities have influenced my life in a more direct way." To the Congregational churches both Trinitarian and Unitarian, Rihbany acknowledges the greatest debt for theological freedom in largest measure, and the highest level of spiritual thought. "I have journeyed from the religion of 'authority for truth' to the religion of 'truth for authority'—

a religion which teaches me the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and the friendliness of the universe, and makes me heir to all the prayers, songs, and sermons of the ages."

From Bondage to Liberty in Religion, by George T. Ashley, is another autobiography that discloses in detail the mental and spiritual transformation of an active and responsive nature. Mr. Ashley was brought up in the Baptist Church in Louisiana, and seeking to enter the Baptist ministry was admitted to a denominational college. In the course of his second year in college, fellowship was withdrawn from him because he had questioned the warrant for "close communion," and as a result his preparation for the ministry was abruptly broken off. He allied himself with the Methodist Church and became a "circuit rider," but again certain books given him to fit himself better for his work as an itinerant Methodist preacher furnished the material that led him out of the ministry and for a while out of religious connections. He heard of Unitarianism long after he had won intellectual freedom, but he was glad to have fellowship. "It was here (in Unitarianism) that I first found my bearings and placed my feet on the solid rock of rational religion. The supreme satisfaction, the peace of mind, serene content, and supernal joy of this situation I shall not attempt to describe. . . . It is indeed a new birth, a new light, a new life of freedom, fellowship, and fraternity in a common service of God and humanity." Mr. Ashley is now (1924) minister of the First Unitarian Society of Wichita, Kansas.

Dr. L. P. Jacks, the biographer of his eminent father-in-law, Stopford Brooke, is also the author of another biography, *From Authority to Freedom, The Spiritual Pilgrimage of Charles Hargrove.* The opening sentences of this book are these:—"The history of European thought for the last four hundred years might be described, not inaptly, as 'a pilgrimage from authority to freedom.' In the pages that follow this history will reduce itself to the dimensions of a single life. As the growth of a human body repeats the evolution of the race at large, so the growth of one man's mind may comprise in a few brief years a process which occupies centuries on the stage of the world. The pilgrimage of Charles Hargrove began in an effort to find certitude, and the peace which certitude is supposed to bring, under the authority of the Bible. Failing there, the effort was repeated with yet greater determination and thoroughness in the Church of Rome. Again it failed, and the second failure was the more disastrous because for nearly ten years the pilgrim believed that in Rome he had found what he sought. After this shipwreck he abandoned the quest for absolute certainty as a goal attainable by the human mind and freely staked his soul on the high probability that Love is supreme in the universe—in other words, that there is a living God."

This story of Charles Hargrove (1840-1918) is dramatic and tragic for it includes much unhappiness for himself and his parents. Yet it has a fortunate working out since from 1876 until his death in 1918, Hargrove was a Unitarian minister, eminently useful and influential, and happy in his life

and its activities. His father had been a clergyman of the Church of England, but left a good parish and all prospects of advancement to join a small sect called the Plymouth Brethren, who had no professional ministers and met in halls or houses instead of in churches. Hargrove says of them:—"Our religion was mainly Bibliolatry, the worship of the Bible as the Word of God. As soon as we learnt to read, a copy was given to each of us and as we grew up we took it with us wherever we went. No other book was ever allowed to be placed on it. We were taught that every word of it was inspired by God, that it was His Book. Certain doctrines were plainly stated in it. First, that I was a dreadful sinner. Secondly, Hell. Thirdly, came conversion, the only way of escape from Hell. Then Jesus was God and had come on earth to pay the penalty for our sins."

One of the masters at the school he attended was a High Church Anglican and secretly taught Hargrove the arguments for the authority of the Church. When these opinions transpired, his family were hard upon him. "I was treated as one who had committed a grievous offense, and, overcome by threats and entreaties, I yielded and renounced the errors into which I had been led." Four years followed of vacillation between High Church doctrines and scepticism, and finally his position was that he believed what the Church taught. Then arose the question what the Church taught, and he found this as hard to determine as what the Bible taught. Authority was needed and he soon was led to see the Church of Rome as the only trustworthy authority, and in 1862 he was received into its protection. "Taking it too much for granted that there had

been given to men a divine and supernatural revelation, I had been led to see that such a revelation was futile unless there was a living authority to keep and to interpret it, and that such absolute authority could be no other than the only Church which ever claimed to be such."

This was a harsh blow to his zealous father and mother. His mother died in 1867 and his father in 1869, and neither could ever accept the decision of their son as anything but a discredit and shame, and a wrong to themselves. Hargrove became a Dominican monk under the name Brother Jerome and lived in the convent of Santa Sabina at Rome (1863-1866). He was then in convents at Corsica and Carpentras near Avignon (1866-1869); at the latter place was made a priest and a fully qualified member of the Order of Preachers. He was sent to Trinidad to work on the staff of the Dominican mission. Here he stayed until 1872, when he seceded from the Church and returned to England. "To this I can no longer submit. The liberty God has given me, man shall not take away."

These were his reasons for going over to Rome. 1. There must needs be some religion revealed of God. 2. Such a religion requires a living infallible teacher. 3. The Church of Rome is the only body which can make a reasonable pretension to be this teacher. Therefore, the Church of Rome is to be obeyed. "I had sore difficulties in accepting the teaching of Rome as divine, above all, in accepting that revolting doctrine of everlasting punishment. For ten years I succeeded in firmly believing in Hell; other things were easy by comparison with it. In course of time the growth of my mind magnified

this fearful difficulty, and forced upon my attention a new one—the sinfulness of subjecting reason to faith." From 1872 he read and studied, then lectured on English Literature in University Extension courses, then married in 1875, and agreed to become minister of Mill Hill Chapel, Leeds, a Unitarian congregation, in 1876, a position which he filled with marked success for thirty-six years. Of the Unitarian fellowship he writes:—"Here, indeed, I found a church truly one and Catholic, for it alone excluded none, recognized as deadly no mistakes save that of altogether denying religion, and the possibility of it. It was not immediately that I saw this, and it was yet longer before I saw my way opened to joining that one body which has no creeds and tests, which unites in cordial sympathy men differing widely in opinion, agreeing together in worship of the Supreme Life, and in cordial acknowledgment of the world's obligations to Jesus of Nazareth. Between the consistent religion of dogmatism and the consistent religion of liberty, between the marvellously perfect system of Rome and the entire freedom from system which calls itself Unitarianism, I see no choice."

These words of Charles Hargrove have unusual force as he had tried both of the recognized sources of authority in religion, an infallible book and an infallible church. The other spiritual pilgrims whose lives we have glanced at had only experience of one kind of authority, Hargrove had been subjected to both in turn, and thoroughly tested their worth, and the evidences of his biography justify his rejection of both. He truly found himself and fulfilled himself when he clearly chose and followed

freedom and self-reliance, under a trust in God and a love of truth.

The Unitarians are not the only Christians who pay allegiance to the religion of the spirit, but with a genuinely Catholic temper they try to garner from all quarters aids and inspirations to the more perfect life. It is the spirit of Christ, and not the doctrines of Christianity that Unitarianism enforces and delights in. In this it is in agreement with the thought of many liberals who do not call themselves Unitarians, but who emphasize religion as a life and not a doctrine, as communion with God and his Christ, and brotherly fellowship with all men. The Unitarian way is coming to be the path of a growing number of pilgrims from authority to freedom.

A Comment for Readers of this Pamphlet

Who are Unitarians

"WHAT, then, is the duty, in the present time of transition, of the Unitarian Church? The views of Scripture, of church authority, of church doctrine, which are now making their way among all the orthodox churches, are to us no novelties. As we read the controversies, our prevailing feeling is one of surprise that what has long been commonplace in our own thought should seem so revolutionary. It would be unnatural not to feel gratification at this wide-spread gain of liberal thought. And yet our deeper thought should not be one of complacency, but rather of serious responsibility. Our earlier work of negation and criticism is now being done by others on the largest scale. The creeds and confessions from which we long since departed are crumbling away under influences much more powerful and destructive than any which are in our control. It is for us reverently to listen to the voice of the time which cries, as to that prophet in Patmos, 'Behold, I make all things new!' Surrounded by dissolving opinions, it is not for us to cling with passionate feebleness to things outworn, but to devote our whole energy as a Church to all that is positive and constructive in religious thought, all that is deepening and helpful in the spiritual life.

If it be true that the whole Protestant world is moving toward something like Unitarianism, remember, friends, that it lies with us to show that such a consummation is devoutly to be wished. It is for us to show that we have not lost our faith in God or our love of the Master; that all which is consoling and invigorating in Christianity is ours as richly as before."

From *A Criticism of Heresy*, by Theodore C. Williams.

THE ORIGIN AND CHARACTER OF THE BIBLE

AND ITS PLACE AMONG SACRED BOOKS

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CHRISTIANITY AND EVOLUTION

BY

MINOT J. SAVAGE

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CHRISTIANITY AND EVOLUTION

If evolution is true, what becomes of Christianity? Are the two antagonistic, so that one necessarily excludes the other? That depends upon definitions. It was said not many years ago, that the dogma of the supernatural and instantaneous creation of man, by the fiat of a purely personal God, was the very foundation of Christianity, and essential to its existence. But I utterly fail to see how the two have any necessary relation to each other. So I would answer our opening question by saying, Since evolution is true, therefore Christianity, one of its products, is also true. This statement will hold only of its essential life. Forms and statements may change indefinitely, while the same life that created the forms remains. The life that animates the caterpillar, as it crawls slowly along the ground, is the same life that soars and floats and glitters in the butterfly. The transformation extinguishes not the life. One of the results of evolution cannot possibly contradict evolution itself. I am none the less a Christian, then, because I am an evolutionist. I will even say I am a Christian *because* I am an evolutionist. To justify this position, to trace the progress of religion until it culminates in Christianity, and to show the relation it sustains to those religions that have preceded it—this is my present purpose.

The first form that the religious thought of the world clothed itself in was fetichism. It sprang up naturally and necessarily out of the best and highest thought of the time. It is nothing to be contemptuously despised, any more than the infant's first efforts at speech. It accorded with all the philosophy and facts then known, quite as well as Christianity to-day harmonizes with the knowledge of to-day. It agreed perfectly with what was known of the universe, and sprang out of that knowledge. It was just as necessary a phase of the religious life of humanity, as twilight is a necessary phase of sunrising. Look at the process of thought out of which it sprang. Man recognized his own personal will and choice as the source of all his movements and power. This was the only kind of power he knew anything about: therefore, whenever he saw exhibitions of life and power, he could account for them only on the ground of his knowledge and experience. Man can never conceive of any thing that transcends all his knowledge. Thus his experience compelled him to endow with personal will and choice every thing about him. His dreams made him familiar with the thought of spiritual beings existing apart from substantial bodies; and these souls he thought of as the source of life and power. And it was natural for his crude thought, to endow all things with souls. Thus, when a savage buried along with the dead warrior his horse, his bow and arrow and spear, his kettle and his cooking utensils and tent appurtenances, he was not so silly as to suppose that he was going to take these material things with him to the happy hunting-grounds: he believed that the souls of these

things would accompany and still serve and be useful to the soul of the warrior. Stones, sticks, trees, reptiles, birds, springs, rivers—all things were thus alive to him, and represented a personal consciousness like his own.

And, as I have already shown, since the principal forces encompassing early humanity were forces that hurt them, on the action of which they could not calculate, and of which they were therefore afraid, they thought that most of these beings were evil-disposed toward them. They did not know nature enough to control it and make its powers serve them, and they had not philosophy enough to see how apparent evils might become real good: so, of necessity, their first gods were devils, and the earliest religions were devil-worship. Even today, should you go to people in this condition of mind (and fetich-worship is still widely prevalent), and tell them about God, they would perhaps inquire, "But what if this great being should eat me?" and the effect would very likely be, that they would run off affrighted into the jungle, to get away from God.

You will notice here what you will find to be true always and everywhere, that the prevailing thought of God accords with, and is on the same level as, the prevalent philosophy of the universe, the theory of the world.

The next step in the evolution of religion was to polytheism. This is only fetichism partially generalized. That is, instead of making each tree a god, they rose to the thought of one god for all the trees. Instead of each frog or serpent being a deity, they had thought of a king, or god, of all the frogs or

all the serpents. They divided nature off into departments, with a deity supreme in and ruling each. Thus Aeolus became God of the winds, Neptune of the oceans and seas, Jupiter of the heavens, Pluto of the underworld of spirits, and so on. The individual spirit in each individual thing was not at first destroyed: only there was one chief, like the chief of a tribe, who held the allegiance of all. You see here the social and political condition reflected in the religion. This only shows how all the different departments of human thought and life, social, political, philosophical and religious, keep even step and progress side by side. One side of humanity does not outrun another. Not only did they have gods of the several departments of nature; but they gradually rose to the conception of abstract ideas, and had deities to represent the departments of thought and the various mental life. So Apollo was the god of eloquence, Minerva the goddess of wisdom, the Muses superintended poetry and the arts.

One step more brought the human mind to anthropomorphic monotheism. That is, they generalized still more; and instead of gods supreme in their different departments, like the kings of sovereign states, they conceived a universal monarchy of the world. But as yet this universal monarch was only a mighty and gigantic being in the image of man; for they could think of no higher power than that which humanity represented. And, though he was supreme, the other gods were not dead. The conception was very much like the theory of our government, in which the president is surpeme executive, while still the governors rule, as subject to

him, over the several states. Even Israel at first had no higher idea than this of their Jehovah. They sing of him as being "a great king above all gods." The "all gods" are real beings: only Jehovah is "king above" them. In the progress of thought these subject gods at last die out, or else become degraded to the position of rebellious but yet conquered and subject devils. This last was the condition of things in the popular thought of early Christianity; and it is the condition of things in popular Christianity to-day; only that the people who still believe in the devils have forgotten where they came from, and how the belief originated. God is still to most minds only a gigantic man, acting on human motives and impulses, and according to human methods.

But among the higher thinkers of all ages, there has been a tendency to take the fourth and highest step of all—that leading to a purely spiritual monotheism. Jesus gave it its purest old-time expression, when he said, "God is a spirit," and taught that he did not dwell in any one material place, like the ark, the temple, Gerizim or Moriah. Modern science, culminating in evolution, rounds out and completes this conception by teaching that God is the spirit and life, underlying and giving form to all things, while yet he transcends all thought, and eludes all attempts to give him shape, and slips through the finest-wrought meshes of all the creeds. This is the perfect monotheism, "God over all, and in all, and through all."

The outward forms of all religions have, of necessity, taken their shape from the prevalent thought of the time. Thus the growth has been from the

sorcery and charms of fetichism, through animal and human sacrifices, prostitutions, symbol-worships, idolatries, rituals, and stately ceremonies, up to the high spiritual thought that true worship is the aspiration and adoration of the heart, and that mercy and justice and truth are more than all altars and sacrifices. Only the finest thought and the finest living can appreciate this last even yet. It seems unsubstantial and unreal to the multitude; just as this same multitude cares more for a minstrel than a symphony, for a farce than for Hamlet, for a chromo than a Raphael.

We must now pass to the evolution of the ethical side of religion. Morality and religion are closely connected in our minds; but originally they had no relation to each other. At first men prayed and sacrificed to and worshipped the gods, not because they thought of it as a moral duty, but because they feared them, and wished to ward off some supposed danger; or because they wished some flavor, and hoped to gain it in this way. So far was the fetich-worshipper's mind from connecting any moral ideas or thoughts of right or wrong with the worship of his gods, that he did not conceive his gods themselves as moral, or as caring for right. One does not seek to please the devil with righteousness. The only morality of that time grew out of the simple human relationships in which they stood to each other; and the gods and religion had nothing whatever to do with it. The same was and is true of polytheism. In Greece and Rome, the popular religion was in no way connected with the popular morality. The gods were simply the kings and rulers of heaven and earth; and they represented, i

their own characters, all phases of human character, even its vices and crimes. They even patronized and protected vices and crimes, so that licentiousness and theft and murder were sometimes a main part of religion. There were, indeed, supposed to be Fates and Furies that punished the more flagrant outbreaks of wickedness; and in later ages they thought of future rewards and punishments. But they were only afterthoughts. Men could even pray to the gods for help in some deed that now would ostracise a man from society, or shut him behind prison-bars.

The moral motive and sanction in communities like ancient Athens were purely social and political; so that, though religion and morality were growing side by side, though they reacted on and modified each other, they yet sprang from different sources, and flowed like parallel rivers before they come to a junction.

During the early history of Israel, religion and morality were quite as distinct as among other people. Good worshippers of Jehovah also worshipped Baal and Ashera with obscene rites; they could lie and steal, and be drunken, and murder, could neglect father and mother, and play false to all the moralities of life, and yet not forfeit their allegiance to the national God. But the later conception of Jehóvah represented him, through the mouths of the prophets, as a moral God, who demanded "clean hands and a pure heart" on the part of his worshippers.

In the teachings of Jesus, religion and morality came into still closer combination. In his highest thought, they became identical. To love God with

all the heart, and the neighbor as ourself, became at once the summing-up of all religion, and, at the same time, the perfect formula of morals. But in the hands of his immediate followers, and of those who gave shape to Christianity as an institution in the world, religion and morality became separated once more. Religion was metamorphosed into a "scheme of salvation." The thing to be saved from was not unrighteousness, but hell; and the means of salvation were not right thinking and living, but baptism and faith. So the grand work of Jesus was partly undone by his disciples. Indeed, his thought was so far beyond his age, that only a few could comprehend it, and it was necessarily degraded to the level of the common intelligence. The Church became a close corporation, holding the keys of heaven as a corporate privilege, for the exclusive use of its members. And one "without," however moral and godlike, could only find refuge among the devils in hell; while those "within," though ever so vile, had become partakers of the corporate spirit and grace, and so had gained a "right to the tree of life, and could enter into the city." This is Romish doctrine still. The brigand of modern Italy looks to his saint to help him plunder, and returns the favor by offering at his shrine a saint's share of the booty. So it is nothing strange that Tetzel should travel through Europe selling papal indulgences, the privilege beforehand of committing all sorts of sins and crimes, so only that he recompensed the Church, which, "for a consideration," promised to keep the gate of heaven ajar for him till he got ready to go in.

Evolution goes back, and, taking up the pure

word of Jesus, completes and enforces it with all the knowledge and emphasis of modern science. When it makes all law, physical, intellectual, and spiritual, only the manifestation of the living, loving, righteous God, then it absolutely identifies religion and morality, or makes morality only a part of the greater and grander thing, religion. God is not any longer a being sitting apart, to be pleased or displeased by what you do, or do not do, as pertaining personally to him, while life here in the world is something disconnected from him. But God is here, all about us and in us. He is in sun and air and ocean and earth. He is in heartbeat and brain-throb, in every fibre and muscle and thrilling nerve of the body. He is not only in the truths of religion, but he is in the truths of science. The laws of the intellect are his laws; the light of truth is his light; the moral relations in which we stand to our fellowmen are the expression of his thought and life in humanity. So that duty to God becomes absolutely identical with all human duty. Righteousness before God is absolutely identical with all human righteousness. Pleasing God is obeying all his laws. Salvation can possibly be nothing more nor less than coming into perfect accord with the whole life and movement of things. A man is saved just in so far as he knows and obeys the laws of God. Perfect salvation is perfect knowledge and obedience. A man in this condition is of necessity perfectly moral and perfectly religious.

Thus the teaching of evolution completely accomplishes what Jesus began, but what popular Christianity failed to carry out—it identifies and makes one the moral motive and the religious mo-

tive. The gods have become one; that one has become spirit; and that spirit has become the life and inspiration of all goodness and truth and beauty in state, in society, in the individual, in art, in letters, in science. Indeed, in the grandest sense, God has become "all and in all."

If evolution be true, the life of the universe is one life. And since religion is a part of this life, if evolution be true, the religious life of the world must be one. Let us, then, search for the essence of religion, see whether it exists everywhere, and, therefore, whether there are many different religions, of which Christianity is one; or whether there is only one religion, of which Christianity is the highest outgrowth and expression. Science teaches us that there is only one life on the globe. From the little viscous globule that palpitates in primeval seas, or the lichen that creeps over the rock, up through all ascending forms of plant and animal, till you reach the infinitely involved brain of Newton working a problem in the differential calculus, the imagination of Praxiteles seeking the hidden god in the block of marble, or the complex arts, societies, and politics that issue in our world-wide civilization—everywhere and all through and all up, it is one life that beats in it all. So evolution teaches that the blindest gropings in the realm of religion were only poor, weak human hands and feet feeling after the lowest step in "the world's great altar-stairs, that slope through darkness up to God." The fetich-worshipper, with the best light and knowledge he had, went "feeling after God, if haply he might find him," who is "not far from any one of us." It was not depravity on his part when

he stood in awe of, and worshipped, and sacrificed and prayed to, a stick or a reptile. He saw therein the infinite mystery and life of the world, and interpreted it as well as his ignorance permitted; and so constructed a religion as high for him as ours is for us—that is, a religion as true and high as his philosophy enabled him to think. He was not so foolish as to worship the stick: it was the mysterious and wonderful life in the stick, he adored. He who to-day reverences the church, the altar, a day or the Bible, is doing the same, with the difference there is between a man and a child. The child thinks and feels and imagines as a child; but it is the same life, the same brain, the same heart, that make the after man. So that which the child-man reached after and thought of was the best interpretation he could give of the same God in nature that "the heavens declared, and the firmament showed, and day and night uttered speech" of, to the Psalmist—the same that we see in all things to-day. And when, in after times, they offered to God their children in human sacrifice, it was not human depravity that prompted the (to us) murderous deed. Jephthah tenderly loved his daughter; Abraham's heart yearned over Isaac; the Ganges mother clung to her babe with the same heart-wringing mother-love that throbs in your bosoms. But the gods were inexorable; and they gave with heartbreak and tears that which was dearest, because heaven demanded the precious gift by all the sanctions of religion. Though the deed was horrible, it was reverence and fear for the gods, that nerved the arm, and steeled the heart. It was the same religious motive in the heart as that which

made the martyrs, and has been the inspiration, in all ages, of heroism and noble deeds. And even the services of impurity had behind them the motive of supposed divine sanction and religious obedience. So that when the Santal uses his fetich for a charm, when the Parsee fireworshipper bows before the rising sun, when the Hindoo lies down to be crushed by his Juggernaut, when the Chinaman offers incense before the image of his ancestors, when the Buddhist devotee sits beneath a tree, and all day recites some holy and magic word, when the Romanist bows to the crucifix, when the Ritualist recites from his book, when the Quaker sits silent and waits for the spirit, when the Protestant bows in prayer, or when the philanthropist goes out on some deed of mercy, believing that "he prayeth best who lovest best"—in all these human bosoms beats the one throbbing, human heart; and each, according to his knowledge, seeks to worship the mysterious life of all things, that we call God, after the highest and most sacred fashion which he has learned. However inadequate his conception of God, he still seeks to find the

> "Father of all, in every age,
> In every clime, adored,—
> By saint, by savage, and by sage,—
> Jehovah, Jove, or Lord."

The thought of God that is held may be wild, chaotic, and, to our mind, wicked. But his art and his government and his civilization are the same; and he thinks, in the one case, on a level with his thought in the other. Religion can have no expression higher than the age is capable of: so it

advances with the advance of man. But the point is, that all religions are reaching out after the same God that each one of them fancies it has found. It is the same religious nature of man in all the varied manifestations. Thus religion is one just as art is one, or literature is one. Each age and each nation finds its own expression; and each one is true or false according as it approximates more or less nearly to the perfect truth of things.

But when I say that religion is one, do I then say that one religion is as good as another, and that Christianity is no more divine than any other? Let us see. Human thought is one; that is, it is all alike the product of human brains, and differs only in quality and degree: do I therefore say that Newton's thought is on a level with, and no better than, that of a clown? Poetry is one: is therefore Shakespere no higher or more divine than Tupper or Walt Whitman? Art is one: is this to say that the snowman that makes the holiday frolic of a lot of boys is to be put on the same level as the Moses of Angelo, or the Christ of Thorwaldsen? In all these cases, the infinite range of production is the work of precisely the same faculties, that differ only in the kind and quality of work. And each special work is true and valuable just in so far as it expresses the true and the divine in its department. So all religions are the outgrowth of the divine, the religious nature in man. But there are all degrees of truth, of excellence, and therefore of divinity, ranging from the deformities of the rudest fetich, up to the divinest thoughts and scriptures and hymns and prayers of the loftiest seers of the world. Christianity, then, is not something thrust into, but apart

from, the growing order of the world, any more than Handel's "Messiah" is out of tune and accord with all the music of humanity that, beginning with the rudest song and pipe of reeds, leads up to and culminates in its grand harmonies. Christianity is the highest outcome of religious evolution, just as man is the highest outcome of animal life. It is no more severed from the rest than the full-blown rose is severed from the little twig that broke the seed, and developed into the bush. It is the bright-colored, sweet-scented, and consummate flower on the topmost bough of the religious life of man.

Since, then, Christianity is the result of evolution, is it to be expected that evolution will still go on, and ultimately outgrow and leave Christianity behind? This is the hasty logic of some. Christian schemes of salvation, Christian cosmogonies, Christion ecclesiasticisms, Christian rituals—these may and probably will be outgrown. Much of what is called Christian theology will be sloughed off and left behind, as a growing bean rejects its pod. All life takes to itself form, and clothes itself in outward symbols and institutions; but these are only clothes that are cut and worn after the fashion of the age. A boy may change the cut and style of his clothing with every year; and he must put on larger as he grows, to suit the developing size and figure of his body; and he may wear as many fashions as ingenious tailors can invent; but all through, from infancy to age, it is the same boy becoming youth and man. If, therefore, Christianity does put off its old clothes, and put on larger ones as it gets larger, it will not necessarily follow that Christianity itself will be outgrown and left behind. If it

contain in itself any touch of the universal and eternal, it must live forever; and if this something that is eternal in it be of its very essence, as Jesus taught it, we may still logically hold that it is Christianity.

As I have already shown, when Jesus said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself," he gave utterance to words that absolutely identified religion and morality, and linked all life with God in the same sense in which it is to-day done by the doctrines of evolution. These words Jesus made central; and they are the formula of a perfect human life. So that, so far as we can see, the utmost progress of evolution in human life—individual, social, political—can only approximate more and more closely to this infinitely progressive and expansive ideal. It means the command to be perfect; and even God himself cannot outgrow perfection.

While, then, the popular forms and creeds and institutions may be outgrown, and replaced by better, the essential spirit and life of Christianity will become more and more the essence and spirit of evolution itself, so far as it bears on humanity. The whole force of evolution, henceforth, will lift up and urge on humanity toward the fullest and highest Christian life.

Is evolution, then, a radical or a conservative element in religion? It is both. It is radical in so far as it eats away, tears down, and leaves behind, the transient and perishable forms; for these things, when decayed and fallen, only become obstructions in the pathway of human progress. But so far as essence and life are concerned, evolution is conser-

vative. It teaches that the one, all-important thing is life. The forms live for it, and not it for the forms: so it does not regard a partial, incomplete, or even grotesque form, so objectionable that it is to be got out of the way at so great a cost as the risk of the life it holds. It will keep a flower in a cracked flowerpot, rather than risk the flower itself, by knocking the pot away. It will leave a man the inadequate shelter of his hut, rather than tear it down about his ears in a storm, before it can invite him into a better house. Regarding all things as a growth from small beginnings, it does not teach the top of a tree to ignore its roots, nor a mansard house-roof to despise the mudsills, nor a man's head to scorn his feet. It is, therefore, tolerant of ignorance and half-development, and the slow process by which a little comes to be more. Since it took God millions of ages to get the earth habitable even for reptiles, it does not ask him to lift the reptiles up into humanity, and make humanity absolutely complete, in six days.

Thus evolution is tolerant even of fetichism. It would not knock an idol out of an ignorant religionist's hands, except as it can replace it by a purer and truer symbol. It would not destroy Mohammedanism, except by replacing it in the minds of its devotees by a nobler God than Allah, and a better morality than that of the Koran. It will permit the Romanist girl to keep her beads and her mass until she can grow into a conception of a higher and more spiritual religion. To take these away, and leave her empty-handed and empty-hearted, is against its whole spirit, and seems to it impiety. It lets the boy keep his toys until, having become a

man, he is ready to "put away childish things." So the attitude of evolution toward orthodoxy is such as makes it rejoice that men will cling to orthodoxy until they can see and feel that something else is better. The moral and religious life *first* and *highest*. Religious forms and creeds and rituals are only the expression of its life, and made to serve it. As the life lifts and broadens it will lift, break up, and sweep away its covering that threatened to be its bond, as the spring freshet tosses on its bosom and sweeps away the ice that covered it, but was not strong enough to hold it in chains.

Evolution, then, in religion, will seek to find and spread abroad all truth, believing that the inner life is able to stretch the bark, and fit it to its various stages of life and growth. It tolerates the twilight because it leads to the sunrise. Its trust is in time, light, growth and God. It is patient with the lower form of life, and also with the lower life of man; for it knows that these are but the necessary childhood of life, that at last shall grow up to and culminate in

"The crowning race
Of those that, eye to eye, shall look
On knowledge; under whose command
Is earth, and earth's, and in their hand
Is nature like an open book;

"No longer half akin to brute;
For all we thought and loved and did,
And hoped and suffered, is but seed
Of what in them is flower and fruit."

And so, holding always any present to be but

the seed of a better future, it trusts in and waits for the still larger unfolding of

"That God which ever lives and loves,
One God, one law, one element,
And one divine, far-off event
To which the whole creation moves."

[No. 304]

THE RELATION OF EVOLUTION TO RELIGION

BY

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THE RELATION OF EVOLUTION TO RELIGION*

THE problem of the origin of man is in one sense a secondary one—a natural inference from known facts. That "Man's Place is in Nature" is so well supported as to leave room for no opposing point of view. Mankind has certainly arisen by slow degrees from an early mammalian stock, but not from any of the existing types of manlike or anthropoid apes (gorilla, chimpanzee, gibbon or orang-utan), still less from any form properly called monkeys, groups of animals very different from apes, being their lowly cousins long diverging from the advancing stock. Yet it is reasonably certain that the earliest man and the earliest anthropoids have had a common origin.

For the study of the nature and origin of man or any other kind of organism we have three sets of data. These are morphology (comparative anatomy), embryology and paleontology.

In morphology we compare homologies (fundamental resemblances), not mere analogies or likenesses, which are skin deep. The inside of an animal tells what it is; the outside where its ancestors have been. A homology is a deep-seated or basic resemblance, as that of the bones of the foreleg of a dog to the bones of the arm

* Excerpt from notes on Evolution in the Sunday *Chronicle* of San Francisco. Published by special permission of David Starr Jordan, and the *Chronicle*.

of man. An analogy is a surface likeness, as the four legs of a table may be compared with the legs of a horse—table and horse alike having a horizontal axis, one leg under each corner. But the legs of table and horse are made in totally different fashion and show no indication of a common heredity.

The difference between man and apes does not lie chiefly in the bodily structure, but in the relative development of the brain and what we can do with it, especially in the higher types of man. Man, as we know him, has speech, reverence, memory and a power of abstract thought far beyond any ape, these creatures being in a sense, as John Wesley observed, "the first rough draft of man."

The evidence of embryology tends in a like direction. The early embryonic life of all vertebrates is much the same. All have gill slits and structures related to water-breathing, as fishes have. But in the higher forms these structures become absorbed, the slits closed and their existence traceable chiefly through the direction of the large blood vessels of the neck, which retain the same position in the human body as in the fish. It is a general rule—not, however, to be too rigidly applied—that the embryonic life of each type of animal repeats the life history of its ancestry.

The evidence from paleontology (extinct life) is naturally as yet less complete, but wholly adequate. With those animals which have bones, teeth, spines or shells we find these hard parts

in enormous numbers and have therefore a fairly complete record for very many millions of years, a record which is constantly expanding.

For land animals the case is quite different, as their bones are preserved only when hermetically sealed against air or moving water. In caves, in desert sands or in river deposits their bones occur, and it is in such localities mainly that ancient human bones have been discovered. With apes and monkeys, largely inhabiting forests, any relic of a skeleton is a great rarity. Of all the millions on millions of individual apes and monkeys which have lived and died on the earth only a few hundred bones remain.

But a certain number of human bones of great age have been uncovered and with them a far larger number of "artifacts," implements made by primitive men and reflecting the stages of human culture. The oldest of these skeletons display various ape-like traits. The most primitive of them is the "ape-man" (Pithecanthropus erectus) of Java, of which a skull and some leg bones are preserved. This creature had an ape-like brain, but apparently walked erect. Later came the "Piltdown man" (Eoanthropus) of Surrey in England, still more human, but not regarded as belonging to our genus, Homo.

Later appear the Heidelberg man (Neanthropus), the Neanderthal man (Homo neanderthalensis) and several others, some of them regarded as ape-men, others as man-apes. Among these are the Austropithecus of Africa and Hesperopithecus of Nebraska. Much later, though still

of great antiquity, is the Cro-Magnon man of Southern France, a primitive form not unlike Europeans of today, big and strong and with a brain cavity comparing favorably with the average types of the most advanced modern races.

In what region man originated is still uncertain. Western Asia is the region most usually assumed, though it may be that some part of Africa was his birth region. But there is no reason to believe that any negro race is ancestral to the European. The negro is most likely derived from some early offshoot from the parental stock.

Certain general considerations may be added. All that we know of life on the earth shows a constant divergence, comparable by analogy to the spreading of the limbs of a tree. Each type shows a constant forward movement—advance or degeneration along its own line, never returning. In looking for "missing links" we must go back in mind along these diverging steps to find the common stock that preceded divergence. The link between man and apes is not a man-ape nor an ape-man, but some less specialized type which lay behind both. This type can be imagined, but has not yet been certainly indicated, the Pithecanthropus being the nearest approach to it. But it is improbable that this Java man was ancestor of yours or mine. Our lineage is far older than he and our hope lies in the advance we have already made and in the certainty that choice strains among us may through their best examples yet rise to higher intelligence and more

perfect devotion to duty to their families and to their race than has yet been recorded in history.

Science is verified knowledge. We know nothing until we find it out. Little by little, through processes of induction we secure a basis of fact, which when stated in terms of human experience becomes truth. But no human truth is absolutely without error. Though all truth must remain incomplete, with time it gains both momentum and accuracy. With its progress, error and false deduction fall off on every side and usually with absolute certainty that they can never be revived.

Thus the astronomer can no longer look at stars as pinholes in revolving crystal spheres, through which shines celestial light. The movable stars or planets are no longer carried from place to place by angels. Comets are no longer omens foretelling death of potentates. Earthquakes are not caused by human wickedness. The sun does not revolve around the earth, which "does move, nevertheless." Lunatics are no longer "moonstruck" nor possessed of devils, and the nature of disease once crudely guessed at is becoming amenable to laws of cause and effect. We can no longer pay respect to the ignorant and arrogant dictum of Archbishop Usher 200 years ago:

> "Heaven and earth, center and circumference were created all together at the same instant, with the clouds full of water, on October 23, 4004 B. C., at 9 o'clock in the morning."

Nor does this resolution adopted forty years ago in Columbia, S. C., condemning "ascent from the brute" now carry conviction:

"Resolved, that man was created by an instantaneous process, without previous animal parentage."

By the co-operation of observers and investigators much of the "debris of grandfather's science" has been cleared away, and with it the preconception of special creation of species of animals and plants and the assumed chasm between humanity and our brother organisms.

The collision of ideas which discoveries have brought is not, strictly speaking, a "warfare of religion and science." It is the inevitable struggle between tradition and knowledge, between conventional beliefs and new points of view demanded by new evidence. This conflict exists, not alone in church and state, but in the mind of every growing and forward-looking man.

I may add a word as to recent controversies over the relation of evolution and religion. From the standpoint of scientific workers there is no conflict between a widening knowledge of the universe, its nature and range, and the conception of man's duty toward his Creator, his fellowman and himself. The word "religion" is used in several different senses. By it one may mean the mainspring of personal character; in an allied sense it may be a reverent attitude, "a feeling for the Eternal," who is not to be defined nor circumscribed.

Again, we speak technically or historically of the various religions of the world, meaning by that term the many organizations or devices which express or promote reverence, or at least

profess to do so. In popular usage, however, the term religion is often used as a general expression for organizations, beliefs, creeds, symbolisms, ceremonies, traditions, superstitions, poetry, which have been developed as aids to religious thought or feeling, or have become parasitic upon it. In this sense religions die, religion never.

These adjuncts may be intrinsically beautiful, inspiring, helpful, friendly, aids to right living. We may not condemn anything which good men throughout the ages have found useful unless they interfere with right action or sane thinking. But very similar devices have grown up around all religions, and their relation to religion itself is only remote and indirect. They are not the essence of Christianity, if Christianity actually rests on the teachings of Jesus, who "went about doing good."

Science is simply intensified and enlightened common sense, and our knowledge of the development of life, called evolution, stands in no more antagonistic relation to religious feeling than does astronomy, geology, geography, chemistry or physiology, all of which have in turn run the gauntlet of opposing "fundamentals" based on tradition or ignorance.

To serious minds it seems increasingly evident that the majestic mechanism of the universe and the perfect fitting of life to the earth it rests on are no chance products of fortuitous clashing.

Atheism, like fundamentalism, is a form of dogma, the result of the closed mind. Science knows no final decision, looking forward con-

stantly towards new evidence. It is a function of science to see the universe in the large and to recognize, with reverence, the power and wisdom (if we must use human words) of the unknown, and to science unknowable, "first cause" through whom all things have their being, the development of life culminating in reason, religion and love.

Scientific men recognize the mighty power of love, which runs like a golden thread through all animate life, finding its climax in the most perfect devotion possible to man. These two elements, rational order and love, we must recognize as emanating from the same source, as all other works of the "God of the things that are." The mission of Jesus has been defined as bringing into harmony the two conceptions of creative force and love, both equally divine in all their manifestations.

Modern science has no kinship with atheism as we understand that term, however strongly it may stand against superstition of all sorts. It has no faith in the gods worshipped by men in general, but whatever else science may be it is not "godless." Superstition is believing, or pretending to believe, what one knows is not true. The infinite expanse of the universe, its growth through immeasurable periods of time, the boundless range of its changes and the rational order that pervades it all seem to demand an infinite intelligence behind its manifestations. This intelligence we cannot define but of this we feel sure, it can be no mere tribal god, nor one busy

with schemes and plans man-fashion and thwarted by his own creations.

The term "blind force" has no meaning in science. So far as we can see, there is no chaos, nor ever was any. Nor do we find anywhere a trace of whim or caprice.

It was written by Mencius in China more than twenty centuries ago:

> "He cannot be concealed. He will appear without showing himself, achieve renovation without moving, create perfection without acting. It is the law of heaven and earth, whose way is solid and substantial, vast and unchanging."

THE American Unitarian Association is the working missionary organization of the Unitarian churches of America, and is supported by the voluntary contributions of churches and individuals. It seeks to promote sympathy and united action among Liberal Christians, and to spread the principles which are believed by Unitarians to be essential to civil and religious liberty and progress and to the attainments of the spiritual life. To this end it supports missionaries, establishes and maintains churches, holds conventions, aids in building meeting-houses, publishes, sells and gives away books, sermons, tracts, hymn-books and devotional works.

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THE NEW TESTAMENT AND MODERN LIFE

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In Honor of the
Four Hundredth Anniversary of
William Tyndale's Translation of the
New Testament into English

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THE NEW TESTAMENT AND MODERN LIFE

Four hundred years ago William Tyndale completed the translation of the New Testament into English. It was the first version to secure any considerable circulation. Wycliffe had indeed made a translation in 1360, but that was before the days of printing. Tyndale's version of 1525 was the foundation of all the succeeding translations. In celebrating the anniversary of his epoch-making achievement we may well consider what we owe to the labors of those who have shared the hope of Tyndale that wherever the English speech was used the New Testament would be read and understood. "If God spare my life," said Tyndale, to an ecclesiastic, "ere many years I will cause a boy that driveth a plow to know more of the Scripture than thou dost."

Tyndale's prophecy was fulfilled and his prayer was answered. The book once chained to the lecterns in the churches, where only the priesthood could have access to it, found its way into the most remote farmhouses and cottages of Britain, contributing in a degree almost incalculable to the character and the convictions of the people.

Tyndale knew the limitations of his work. "Learned Christians I beseech, for as much as I am sure, and my conscience beareth me record, that of a pure intent, singly and faithfully, I have interpreted it, as far forth as God gave me the gift of knowledge and understanding, that the rudeness of the work

now at the first time offend them not; but that they consider how that I had no man to counterfeit, neither was helped with English of any that had interpreted the same or such like thing in the Scripture beforetime."

Tyndale paid a sad price for his vision and its realisation. When first he planned his translation he received no support in England and was compelled to seek help abroad. Encouraged there to proceed, he commenced the printing of his New Testament in Cologne, but when only ten sheets had been completed he fled to Worms to escape persecution. By the aid of funds from some English merchants he completed his work but it was denounced by the bishops of the Church in England in 1526, and so successfully did they destroy all copies they could find that only one exists today to represent the first printing of the English New Testament. Condemned for heresy, Tyndale was horribly put to death in 1536.

It is interesting to find that the motive which led Tyndale to persevere with his work was that which is today influencing scholars to render the Scriptures into a language closer to the habits of thought and speech of the great masses of the people. He "perceived by experience," he tells us, "how it was impossible to stablish the lay people in any truth except the Scriptures were explained well before their eyes in their mother tongue." "Which thing only," he added, "moved me to translate the New Testament." The Revisers who were responsible for the Standard American Revision of 1901 similarly felt that they were discarding at many points "uncouth, unidiomatic, or obscure phraseology," and thereby rendering the Scriptures more intelligible.

In the early days of the Christian Church, while the documents which were afterwards collected together into what we call the New Testament were still circulating from hand to hand and from church to church, lay Christians had full access to them. But not long after St. Jerome's translation of the Jewish and Christian Scriptures into Latin in 385 A.D. (the version commonly known as the Vulgate, to this day the Bible of the Roman Catholic Church), the Bible became a closed book except to the learned. It was not until the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when men were again turning to ancient learning and when northern Europe was disturbed by the stirrings of nationalism, that there arose any general demand for free access to the Scriptures in the vernacular. The Reformation had for its chief aim to give to the individual Christian a direct relationship to the sources of inspiration and truth, and the Reformers saw clearly that the best weapon against error and superstition, and against the distortion of history in the interests of ecclesiastical imperialism, was the open Bible in the homes of the common people.

In our day we are witnessing the beginnings of what many are calling a New Reformation. As was the sixteenth century, our age is characterized by a frank re-examination of inherited ideas and institutions. Our New Reformation, which is already responsible for many modifications of the message and the practices of the historic churches, has been the fruit of that free and fearless spirit of inquiry which has brought the New Testament, indeed the whole Bible, once more under revision. Intelligent men are examining the claims of those churches which have insisted that they and they alone represent the origi-

nal faith and practice of early Christianity. One result has been seen in a re-writing of the history of the beginnings of the Christian Church. But in the twentieth century our scholars have at hand allies and instruments far more numerous and far more effective than were available for Tyndale and his immediate successors, and it is as yet impossible to foresee the results of their labors.

Let us pass in review some of the results of the modern study of the New Testament. The first general result of which we have to take account is that in the light of modern scholarship the New Testament is no longer seen as a single volume or as a consistent divine revelation vouchsafed to men at a particular moment in time. It is seen, rather, as a collection of documents which exhibit great variety in their scope, content and style, originating at various times within a period that, conservatively estimated, must be accepted as not less than fifty-five to sixty years. It gives us a changing picture of a changing religious movement which had been in existence for years before Paul, writing his letters to the Thessalonian Christians, gave us the earliest part of the New Testament.

We may further say that instead of the New Testament producing the Christian Church, the Church produced the New Testament. Several of the documents comprised in the New Testament are letters which relate to practical problems of church administration and procedure, letters not written for publication or for any wide circulation. Several others constitute memoirs and reminiscences behind which we may trace a body of tradition which all have drawn upon but which has been used by differ-

ent writers with varying emphasis. Still other documents which now form a part of the New Testament have the character of what we call propaganda, having been written to establish and defend certain views as against others which were apparently vigorously or widely held. Many forms of literature are therefore included in the New Testament: biography, history, personal letters, circular letters, at least one "sermon," one prose poem, and tracts dealing with church government and doctrine. A purely literary study would reveal very great differences in the vocabulary and would find great differences in the point of view of the authors, but such a study would lose sight of the common religious interest which brought these writings together into a collection, and which determined that they, and not other writings which we now know had some claims to admission, should be included.

Further still it has become quite clear that in the New Testament we have access not to the original documents as the authors wrote them, but to translations of copies which were themselves made from copies. The history of the New Testament covers centuries in which this copying went on, and we have evidence only of the results, not of the process. A few fairly complete manuscripts of the New Testament come to us from the sixth and following centuries and even older fragments are known, but all these differ considerably one from another, and there are in addition several thousand other copies exhibiting variations of wording and arrangement. It has been part of the task of New Testament scholarship to try to construct a text embodying the greatest number of agreements and including the least pos-

sible number of doubtful wordings, and this is now the nearest that we can come to the original.

As a consequence of the changed methods of study just reviewed, it is being realised by many Christian people that the New Testament is not now regarded by their ministers as a final standard for all future time in matters of doctrine and procedure. It is observed that leaders of religious thought are using the New Testament writings "not as having dominion over our faith" but "as helpers of our joy." In other words they are not used as a source of proof-texts upon which can be built the elaborate structure of doctrinal systems; they are read and studied for the sake of the inspiration that comes from a better understanding of the experience and motives and hopes of the early Christians. This discovery has led in turn to a demand for the New Testament in a more readable form. In the first place, the Authorized or King James Version presents great difficulties in the arrangement of its contents; in the arbitrary division into chapters and verses which comes to us from mediaeval times, in the titles of the separate books, which it is not difficult to show represent late and often erroneous attempts to identify the authors, and in the order of the documents, which entirely fails to suggest in what order they were originally written. Moreover the intelligent lay reader finds the language obscure in places and he is ready to believe that the version of 1611 perpetuated a number of mis-translations. This does not surprise him when he is told that until recently it was supposed that the Greek in which the New Testament was written was distinct from any other written Greek now accessible to scholars, but that within recent years

discoveries in Egypt have shown the language of much of the New Testament to be that in common use in the age which produced it. The revisions of the New Testament published in England in 1881 and in America in 1901 have not sufficed to meet the difficulties of the uninstructed layman and within the last few years a number of versions of the New Testament in "modern" English have appeared. There have also been published volumes in which the contents of the New Testament are re-arranged and made more intelligible, although not presented in modern language.

The new translations have been severely criticised and their authors have been rebuked for "tampering with the Bible," and for placing the unapproachable diction of the Authorized Version "on the intellectual level of the Fourth Reader in the public schools." There are moods in which such criticisms express our feeling. This is partly, of course, because the King James Version has a stately dignity that cannot be improved and partly also because much of the Bible has come to possess what we may call a liturgical value—it has been incorporated into the forms of our worship and we cherish the associations that have gathered around the older language. But despite such criticism these modern versions are being widely read and there is reason to believe that a great many people are now reading the New Testament to whom the Authorized Version made no appeal. We ought to recognize the significance of this recent development and extend a cordial welcome to this achievement of scholarship in bringing the fruits of its labor to the doors of the unlearned. We ought also to see that a version of

the New Testament which is not afraid of colloquialisms may actually give us a more accurate picture of the religious life and thought of those simple people whose religious experience is enshrined in its pages. They had no literary ambitions but were subordinating the art of writing to the expression of their deep convictions. Anything which will make more intelligible to the modern mind the peculiarities of thought and diction of the remote age which produced the New Testament is making it more easy to bring the convictions of the early Christians and the message of Jesus directly to bear upon modern life.

There are some who see in the modern study of the New Testament only the prospect of great loss; they fear the abandonment of ideas which have long been cherished by various branches of the Church. But it must not be supposed that the principal results have been negative in character. It is true that the literary study of the Bible in the nineteenth century did seem at times to be remote from the interests of faith and to lay greater emphasis upon the conjectural analysis of documents than upon the interpretation of the experience which the documents record. Scholars are realising today, however, that these ancient documents were written because certain men went through a profound religious experience, and if they concern themselves with problems of dates and authorship it is only in order that they may come nearer to the experience. "Behind all our study lies the insistent urge of the religious interest; every detail that brings the writer and the writing nearer to our comprehension is of vital concern. We look back at the men, a dozen or more

of them, who penned the writings of the New Testament, and we see them, not as writers at all, not as theologians, still less as philosophers, not as historians or chroniclers or biographers; we see them as simple men who have been laid hold of by an overmastering impulse of religion. To its service they give themselves. These bits of writing . . . . are by-products of their Christian life."[1]

Christianity was propagated by the contagion of character and purpose, as a way of life, not as a system of theology, and it is only in the latest portions of the New Testament that we see the beginnings of an interest in theological interpretations. The first teaching and preaching were expositions of, comments upon, and testimony to, the blessedness of the new life which men found in that Way which was called Heresy.[2] The spoken word ultimately became inadequate because the first Apostles passed from the scene and the oral traditions gave too much scope for the manipulation of the message to suit the preferences of different parties within the Church. When Luke began his Gospel he made clear that his purpose was to insure accurate transmission of the tradition. "Inasmuch as I know of writers who have essayed to draw up a narrative of the established facts in our religion exactly as these have been handed down to us by the original eye witnesses who were in the service of the Gospel Message . . . . I have decided . . . . to write them out in order."[1]

We are led to ask what was the great experience which changed the lives of these first Christians and

[1] Clayton R. Bowen in *Theological Study Today*, p. 81.

[2] See Acts 24:14.

[1] Dr. Moffatt's translation.

sent them over sea and land to bring to others the inspiration of the new faith. This is a question which it is impossible adequately to answer in a few words, because the experience itself varied in its meaning for different men. It is especially difficult for us to express it in the language which they themselves used because they found at hand phraseology which is no longer natural to us. When Jesus was born there were many pious people who were "looking for the redemption of Israel." Their expectations and hopes were colored by ideas that had been long in circulation and had found expression at times in extravagant pictures of the redeemed nation ruled by God's Annointed (or "Messiah"). The first Christian tradition as it passed from Jew to Jew was largely phrased in terms of these Messianic hopes. When Christianity shifted its centers of propaganda from Judea to Asia Minor and Macedonia the tradition had to find new terminology borrowed from the culture of the non-Jewish world, and the primitive organization of the Church owed much to the institutions and customs of pagan societies. We are therefore somewhat at a loss when we try to make significant for the modern mind in ancient terminology the impact of Christianity upon those who left us the New Testament writings. If we find differences which mark off one Gospel from another and which indicate that even as early as the date of writing the first three Gospels men could offer varying pictures of the personality and records of the teaching of Jesus, how shall we expect that any two students of the Gospels today could put forward identical interpretations of their theme? Since Ewald wrote his *Life of Christ* in 1855, followed by

Renan, Strauss, and others, we have seen a succession of attempts to answer the same question. These lives of Christ, down to Papini's, and even to Harlow's *The Man Jesus,* reveal more clearly than anything else the different standpoints of their authors. They have, however, given us vivid pictures of a real person in a concrete situation and supplied outlines which Christian piety and scholarship will fill in. The writer of *Ecce Homo* invited his readers "to reconsider the whole subject from the beginning" and to place themselves "in imagination at the time when He whom we call Christ bore no such name, but was simply, as St. Luke describes him, 'a young man of promise, popular with those who knew him, and appearing to enjoy the divine favor.'" They were asked "to trace his biography from point to point and accept those conclusions about him, not which church doctors or even Apostles have sealed with their authority, but which the facts themselves, critically weighed, appear to warrant." Such a purpose does not alarm many people today but its announcement in 1866 aroused a storm of criticism and abuse. A statement of Dr. Fosdick's illustrates the progress which has been made, "If we ask who Jesus *is*, we may be unsure, we may share our generation's doubts and uncertainties. Change the inquiry, therefore: What has Jesus *done?* It is far more profitable to ask what the world owes to Jesus than to seek agreement on the basis of a single definition of his personality and his place in the divine purpose."

We can perhaps put into a summary statement what is very widely if not universally accepted as the contribution of Jesus to the religious faith of mankind, not with the expectation that any such state-

ment will serve to express the conclusions of all Christians or be adequate to express all that individual Christians feel that they personally owe to Jesus.

Jesus has given us of the Western World the thought of God most rich in meaning, most potent in spiritual efficacy, most universal in its appeal, and least limited by local and temporal conditions. God was for him, and is for his followers, the Righteous Will and Loving Purpose seen in the moral order, apart from which, or in conflict with which, no man can find power, peace, or joy. He is the Love which gives meaning to our goodwill, perfect where ours is partial; the Law by which our emerging moral strength is tested; the Life by which our struggling souls are liberated for the higher obedience of truth and goodness.

Jesus has given us, inseparable from this thought of God, a new estimate of the possibilities in man. His parables of life and destiny, his rebuke of all base exploitation of human beings, above all his personal contacts with the weak, sinful, outcast and misunderstood, revealed a faith in man that gave meaning to the ancient word "made in the image of God." This faith preached by his disciples brought emancipation to those who were slaves of another's will, as it may still bring release to men who have been considering their limitations too closely and overlooking the great possibilities of their lives.

Jesus saw that moral renewal was possible for any man; in the immature he saw only arrested growth, and for the defeated he saw a fresh chance of victory. Without abating for a moment the sov-

ereign law which is an inexorable condition of human life, he saw and showed that at the heart of the Law there is Love, a love that reaches so far that it can forgive even when the law cannot forget.

Jesus gave the world ideals which could be called impractical if it were not for the undeniable fact that they have found partial realisation in the character of many men and women. Homes have been blessed by the spirit of self-sacrifice and unselfish love; men have accepted responsibility for their weaker, erring, downtrodden, outcast, imprisoned fellows; the energies of buyer and seller, producer and distributor, have been brought to the service of the common good not merely where public safety required regulation but by voluntary and self-imposed restraint on the part of those concerned; and mankind is groping towards the practical expression of brotherhood, marking its progress at the Hague, at Geneva, at Washington and Locarno. Whatever its failures, Christianity, proclaiming and applying the ethical ideals of Jesus, has immense achievements to justify its confidence in Him Who gave His Life believing they were practicable. "Christianity may well be ashamed of many things in its history, but of some things it need never be ashamed. Wherever Christ's spirit has welled up in personal character, wherever homes have been illumined by his teaching of self-sacrifice, mutual love, and boundless goodwill, wherever prison systems have been even a little affected by His attitude toward despised and outcast men, wherever His ideals have been applied, in ways however limited, to industrial and international life, we need never be ashamed. The Master's ideals are ahead of us, but they are ahead of us because they

are the loftiest, most challenging conceptions of human character and relationships that mankind has ever known. They will not let us rest. They condemn us, haunt us, rally us, and lure us on. Mankind will not find itself until it works them out and makes them real in all of life. This immense achievement the Man of Nazareth has wrought."[1]

The ultimate meaning of the New Testament is found, therefore, in this central figure whose life, teaching, sacrifice, and living spirit quickened, emancipated, challenged and empowered not only those who knew him "in the days of his flesh" but those who saw him reflected in the witness of his first followers. Through the words of these little documents collected so many years later as our New Testament, those renewed and emancipated men expressed as adequately as they could the lofty thought of God, the spiritual estimate of man, the ideals of inward truth and goodness that they had derived from Jesus. If they exalted the Nazarene in their thought till he seemed unique in his relation to God, can we blame them? Have we a so much more satisfying statement regarding him than that he was the divinely appointed agent of God's kingdom on earth? That is what they meant by calling him the *Messiah*. We may say instead, perhaps, with a Unitarian scholar, "The powers of Jesus evidence a great, ardent, vital, kindling religious personality, who moved and spoke with an authority that even his enemies had to acknowledge, to which minds normal and abnormal were submissive. This is the great outstanding phenomenon which demands our

[1] H. E. Fosdick, *The Modern Use of the Bible*, p. 229.

[1] Bowen in *Theological Study Today*, p. 97.

recognition and our reverent study."[1] The same student adds, "Something happened there in Palestine nineteen hundred years ago that cleft human history sheer in two." If there is any sense in which that can be said, then the New Testament—which alone tells us what happened and allows us to see the persons in whom it happened—is surely our most precious possession. Translators from Tyndale to Moffatt and Goodspeed, who have given the New Testament to the people of their day in a language all could understand, the scholars from Renan to Schweitzer who have disengaged the personality of Jesus from accretions of dogma and shown him to us as One who belonged not only to his age but to all history, these have put us forever in their debt. Among them all no one rendered to the English speaking world so epoch-making a service as William Tyndale, who four hundred years ago took the Latin Bible from the ecclesiastics and handed the English New Testament to the common people of his native England.

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A TWENTIETH CENTURY MAN'S FAITH IN GOD

By

REV. GEORGE ROWLAND DODSON, Ph. D.

Minister of the Church of the Unity

St. Louis, Missouri

A Sermon Preached in King's Chapel, Boston

PUBLISHED FOR FREE DISTRIBUTION

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A TWENTIETH CENTURY MAN'S FAITH IN GOD

The substance of four sermons in King's Chapel, March 9–12, 1926, by Dr. George R. Dodson.

A young man came to his minister in deep trouble. He thought that he had become an atheist and that he could no longer hold the religious view of life. A brief examination showed that what had happened was that the young man had merely outgrown the conception of God taught him in his childhood. This idea had long lain in his mind unrevised, and he had suddenly become aware of its inadequacy. His bewilderment and distress were due to the fact that he had not received the right kind of religious education. He should long before have learned to think in terms of growth, and to appreciate the fact that the idea of God, like all the great ideas of the race, constantly changes and develops, both in the individual and the race, and that, as has happily been said, "one theology goes and another comes, each speaking the language of its day, but the faith abides and the divine life of the soul moves on, and that theologies are but sky-tents, where the soul of man rests for a day or an age in the journey from faith to faith."

Life for many today is confused because thought is confused, and this in turn is in large part due to a widespread and long continued depreciation of the intelligence and its place in the religious life. Faith and feeling have been exalted and character and conduct have been maximized, while clear thinking has been disparaged. The result is that many

have lost their way, while others are unable to distinguish between the essentials and the accidents of religion. Still others try to make up in enthusiasm and zeal for their lack of a message and a program. They redouble their efforts, although they have forgotten their aim.

The impulses, instincts, needs and aspirations which form part of the religious life are as strong today as ever they were, but from a lack of clear guidance many twentieth-century men and women have no vision of their true goals. Their leaders have undertaken to arrest or reverse or ignore the course of life which is ever onward. The result is a failure of adjustment. The main fact about the religious life of today is that it has reached its reflective stage and that unreflective religion is, therefore, no longer possible. Only a rational religion is possible for thoughtful men. When life reaches the stage where it wants to understand itself, the demand for reflection and enlightenment must be met. That is, philosophy becomes inevitable. Emerson says truly that "the temples grew as grows the grass," that is, they were created in an unreflective stage of development, when the artists were guided by their intuitive sense of beauty. But Emerson's poetry expresses the later reflective phase when men are asking what is beautiful in all beauty, what are the laws and canons which we have instinctively followed, but which we now desire to formulate?

Thus aesthetics arises when the aesthetic life becomes self-conscious, reflective, and desires to understand itself. Political science inevitably appears with the increasing maturity of political life. Theology,

too, arises as life grows thoughtful. Unless we remain children we cannot escape the labors, the difficulties, and the rewards of the reflective life. Nor is this life a mere luxury: it is a condition of further progress. Sir Henry Jones has truly said that "This task of self-contemplation and self-comprehension is not one which man can take up or let alone as it best pleases himself. It is a necessity which chooses, and is not chosen. At a certain stage of the evolution of man's rational nature, reflexion arises inevitably. It becomes the urgent condition of further development. The future can be faced only in the light of the past which only reflexion recovers, and the individual, or a nation, can achieve a new triumph only if it has learnt the lessons of its own deeds. Reflexion must succeed action and set free its meaning, if better action is to follow."

It is generally recognized today that religious faith is not usually created by argument. It remains what it always was—a thrilling adventure. But it does not follow that intellect cannot render a service to the emotional life by legitimating aspiration and removing needless misunderstandings which hinder and sometimes inhibit faith and hope. For instance, we occasionally meet with sincere minds who think that they are atheists, but who cannot properly be described by that term. For what they have rejected is not theism, but deism. The pity of the situation is that deism has long been outgrown by those whose theological training has not been neglected. The deistic conception of God is not taught by churches which are abreast of the religious thought of today. It is still met with in some children and is said to

flourish in sections of the country where education has been somewhat neglected. The God of deism is an absentee God who since the creative week has been outside His creation, seeing it go, and occasionally manifesting Himself in interferences with the natural order. When one who has held this thought of God outgrows it, he is at first like a child suddenly disillusioned about Santa Claus, who thinks Christmas has gone forever.

Of those who put away this thought of God, along with other childish things, many attain to a new faith in the immanence or everywhereness of the divine life. They read and rejoice in the 139th Psalm and in Wordsworth's and Emerson's poetry. This is a great advance. Guidance, however, is necessary. The doctrine of Immanence may become a pantheism in which there is no room for moral distinctions. The theologians of today uphold a theism which escapes the danger. They do not equate the life and being of God "with the process of human history or with the last term (so far reached) of any finite attainment." The immanent God of modern theism "is always the infinitely transcedent, and it is the presence of the Infinite in our finite lives that alone explains the essential nature of man." Moreover, there are different degrees and levels. We see something of God in the physical world, in the crystals and in the stars, more of Him in life, still more in humanity, and most of all in the best men and in their ideals. Human history, in the thought of present-day theologians, is the progressive incarnation of the divine life in humanity. The doctrine of evolution has a profound and beautiful religious significance. It is

the story of the unfolding of God's life through the ages. Further, and this is of the greatest importance, the process of evolution is an enterprise on which man not only looks as a spectator, but in which he is a partner. He can say, with the master of the religious life, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work."

The religious troubles of the twentieth-century man are incidents of his growth. It is in religion as it is in science. He who has failed to keep abreast of the creative religious thinking of the last two or three decades is a long way behind. The very ideal of the moral and religious life has undergone radical revision. A generation or two ago men regarded their religious ideas as something delivered to them once for all and to be kept unchanged. They were supposed to be like a glass pitcher which can hold only so much and which cannot be stretched or changed. The later and truer view of today is that ideas are living things, in some respects like seeds which perish that they may increase. It is clear that progress depends upon ceaseless reorganization of our ideas, upon their constant revision in the direction of adequacy and truth.

Consider, for instance, the difficulty about personality. A child's thought of God is necessarily anthropomorphic, that is, God is to him a great man. But with advancing intelligence and reflective power this conception is necessarily outgrown. If all who reached this stage were wisely led, few would suffer any great distress. But since great numbers of young people attend no church, while others attend churches which disparage theology, it not infre-

quently happens that the transition from unreflective and uncritical childhood to maturity is attended with suffering. In the absence of wise counsel and competent guidance, it is common to suppose that in our thoughts of God we have only two alternatives, and that when we cannot longer regard Him as a glorified man, we can think of Him only as a sub-personal or impersonal force. He who had formerly been able to say "Our Father," suddenly finds himself an orphan. Bereft of the love and companionship of the Great Companion, he now faces a lifeless universe, indifferent to him and to all for which he cares. Life suddenly becomes secular, and prayer and worship lose their meaning.

How growing minds which have not received proper theological instruction often fall into confusion and pass through unnecessary suffering is well illustrated in the following story from the experience of a young minister. He had been reading Herbert Spencer, and one day, at the close of one of the last volumes of the series, he read the words that men must hereafter "drop the higher anthropomorphic characters given to the First Cause, as they have long since dropped the lower." The reasoning seemed conclusive. God was gone, though the Infinite and Eternal Energy remained. In such a situation the plight of a layman is serious, but a minister is instantly confronted by a very great difficulty. On the next Sunday at the appointed hour he must lead in the service of worship and in the prayer he must try to voice the aspirations, the faith and trust of his congregation. How was he to do this when he could no longer sincerely believe in a God to whom he could pray?

Like many others making this transition in thought, he finally came through. For a few weeks he simply omitted the prayer. He then tried to express the aspirations and spiritual longings of his people in a meditative, impersonal way. This gave him time to think and carry his studies further. He then discovered to his delight, what he ought to have been taught long before he entered the ministry, that when the mind outgrows the concept of God as a purely personal being, he has before him not one alternative only but two. He found that he had not read Mr. Spencer with sufficient care, for that philosopher had explicitly declared in his "First Principles" that when we put away our childish thought of God, we must avoid "the erroneous assumption that the choice is between personality and something lower than personality; whereas, the choice is between personality and something higher." That is, God is more and higher than personality, and not less. While we can not assign to this superpersonality any attributes as descriptive, it is still legitimate and useful to use our highest words and experiences as symbols of the divine reality. This matter cleared up, the young minister could hardly wait till next Sunday, when he explained the difficulties through which he had passed and thanked the congregation for its patience. "From this day forth," he said, "I resume the use of the old words, God, Our Father, 'Source of all Goodness, Beauty, and Truth,' but I shall henceforth use them as symbols. They are not descriptive, but they mean too little, not too much."

This is the position to which clear thought eventually comes. It seems to have been reached by Emer-

son and many great souls in history. The prophets and seers of the Bible consciously took the highest and divinest of human experiences as the best symbol of the divine. Indeed, Paulsen has concisely expressed the truth that the essence of religion consists "in the trust that the world is not the meaningless play of blind forces, but the revelation of a good and great being whom man may acknowledge as akin to his own innermost essence. For in truth the real essence of every religious belief is the assurance that the true nature of reality reveals itself in that which I love and reverence as the highest and the best, it is the certainty that the good and the perfect, towards which the deepest yearning of my will is directed, forms the origin and goal of all things."

We are today in the happy situation of having faced this great problem frankly, evading nothing, and finding that constructive thought has given more than criticism has taken away. We have lost a God who was but a great man; we have risen above materialism with its conception of unconscious, lifeless forces producing intelligent, creative, and loving personalities, and we have a divine life for which light, love and personality are only inadequate symbols. We can still say "Our Father," and the little child who in its prayer mistakes its symbols for descriptions is after all nearer the truth than a scholar who thinks human life is the unintended outcome of purely physical forces, and who fails to realize that "the human world is a structure of thought, a building of love, an edifice rising more and more in response to right-

eousness, and that it cannot rest upon a non-mental, an unloving, an unmoral foundation."

Some of the difficulties in the way of theistic belief in the twentieth century were already old, centuries ago, but the greatest of them all is a result of science and popular education. The prestige of science today is immense. Its results are so important and so obvious and its promise so rich that what it is supposed to say is accepted without question. Scientia locuta est: causa finita est. Now there is a widespread impression that science stands sponsor for a mechanistic view of the world, a theory of things in which there is no place for God, or even for human freedom and real personality. It is true that this is only an impression, but it is deep and lasting and it inhibits religious faith and life.

Few men of science are avowed and consistent mechanists in their metaphysics, yet it is easy to see why the young student and the reading public so often come to believe that science necessarily involves a mechanistic metaphysics. The reason is this. Physical science finds it useful to conceive of the world in a mechanistic way. It therefore deals only with those aspects of reality which are capable of such treatment and *deliberately ignores the rest.* But the rest, though ignored, does not cease to be and must be taken account of. Ignored factors always avenge themselves. Leading men of science are busy today examining their own concepts and they are discovering, what the philosophers have long known, that physics deals only with certain aspects of the world which, taken by themselves, are abstractions. Mechanism, as a hypothesis in research is very useful and

fruitful, but as a metaphysics, as a philosophy, it is hopelessly inadequate.

This is becoming clear in the universities, but it is a lamentable fact that the public lags behind and is often found to be taking up positions which science has abandoned. It is no longer excusable, and soon it will be no longer intellectually respectable, to make a bad metaphysics and a negative religion out of an hypothesis useful in research. Everyone must sometime learn to avoid the "nothing but" fallacy, the fallacy of assuming that because we find mechanism in the universe and even in life, there is nothing but mechanism. It is, however, a fact that multitudes of thoughtful people who have deep religious needs and longing are inhibited and repressed in their religious life by the idea that the universe which science reveals is pure mechanism, and that worship, prayer, and communion with God are experiences no longer possible to an educated man.

This is pure mistake, and it is also real tragedy. If men who need friendship and prize it should come to hold a view of the universe that would negate it, the magnitude of the disaster would be apparent. And, indeed, such a view is held by many today, although they do not draw the necessary inferences. If the extreme behaviorists are right, and consciousness is merely an inert spectator, as incapable of doing anything as a shadow, then are we but puppets, automata, whose science is to see the strings by which we are worked. This view will doubtless in time come to be regarded as one of the curious vagaries in the history of thought. In the meantime, the necessary implications of the theory, for those who

have the courage of their logical conviction, is to put in the category of illusion the reality of human personalities guiding their lives by ideals and rejoicing in the loving responses of friends.

Is not the needlessness of surrendering the reality of personality and personal friendship on the ground of a mechanistic theory clear to all, and is not the case of theism the same as that of friendship? The leading representatives of science seem to be coming to that conclusion. Here, for instance, is a statement by Arthur S. Eddington, Professor of Astronomy, University of Cambridge: Speaking of the world-spirit in whom we have our being and the view that he is a beneficent Father, and of a direct relation of his spirit to ours, he says that the matter cannot be cleared up by an irrelevant excursion in the cycle of physical definition where the differential equations take their rise. "It is more nearly expressed by reference to a relation of spirit to spirit on the human plane—a relation which means much more than physical science is able to formulate. As to this further question, the scientist and the religious teacher may well be content to agree that the value of a hypothesis extends just so far as it is verified by actual experience."

That is to say, if our experience justifies us in believing in the reality of friendship and religion and of friends and God, physical science offers no veto, no inhibition, but is indeed irrelevant. This is clear once for all. By and by the general public will get past this place of confusion. Many will realize with joy that an obstacle seemingly insuperable has been removed, and that their higher life with its native

longings for the supreme values, for the ideal world, may be freely and joyously lived. No one can estimate what it will mean to have the energy of aspiration, prayer, and faith released in the lives of millions. It is generally recognized today that most cases of nervous breakdown are due to inner conflict, and one reason why conflicts are so hard to resolve is that the religious factor is inhibited, that factor which brings with it courage, hope, and the faith that overcometh the world. When these difficulties are cleared up by honest thought, and not before, the tide of faith will come in, and Matthew Arnold's beautiful poem on the Dover Beach of the sea of faith will have only a historical interest.

Remember his words:

"But now I only hear its melancholy, long withdrawing roar
Retreating to the breath of the nightwind down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.
Ah, love! let us be true to one another: for the world which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy nor love, nor light, nor certitude, nor peace nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain,
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night."

Strange, is it not, that the poet should have been imprisoned in the thought of a meaningless world. It is true that the situation is clearer today than it was then. Still Arnold was a man of insight, and as

Prof. G. B. Foster points out, it is strange that he did not see the implications of the fact that there were fidelity and meaning between him and the beloved. For what was true for these two human beings was not true for them alone; the great race of men of which they were a part had the same capacity and significance. But humanity, the race, sprang from nature, the matrix of all life. Therefore nature was such that love and faithfulness were possible and achievable, faithfulness and love were rooted in the constitution of the world.'' The poem is sincere and pathetic, and tells us simply that in the first onset of Darwinism and biblical criticism not understood, ''a brave knight of the spirit was unhorsed.''

Though much confusion lingers, we are making some headway. It is clear now that we have no experience of a purely physical nature. The only nature we actually know has flowered into human lives, millions of whom live as citizens of a moral and spiritual order. The nature which is studied by physics is but an aspect of the total reality. Dean Inge has recently expressed the truth concisely: ''Nature includes man and man at his best. Nature includes the best man that ever lived—it includes the divine life on earth of Jesus Christ.'' Nature is a vast process, or complex of processes, rising from the level of atoms and electrons to that of spiritual beings inspired by love and guiding their lives by science. And surely Aristotle was right in saying that a process is to be judged by its outcome, rather than by its beginnings. So far, in our part of the universe, man is the highest outcome of evolution, man incomplete but struggling toward ideals of reason

and goodness, light and love. This is the drift of the ages. As Paul, in one of his moments of clear vision saw, the meaning of the great drama is that our race is moving toward the Christ ideal.

On the way from faith to faith, the modern man often has to pass through the experiences of doubt. Unfortunately for him, he has been taught that doubt is not a necessary incident of growth, but is something sinful. So he cries out, "What shall I do with my doubts?" The answer is, "Respect them. Sincere doubt is sacred. It springs from the spiritual side of your nature." Growth means not only the attainment of larger, truer conceptions, but also the leaving behind of that which is outgrown. Doubt is normally the first perception of the inadequacy of ideas we are just about to pass beyond. It is, like the breaking of the shell in the hatching of the chick, a necessary phase of developing life.

Further, not only is doubt a normal and inevitable incident in the evolution of higher from simpler forms of faith, but this natural bewilderment often becomes so extreme as practically to amount to atheism. Of course, it is true, as has been shown, that many people suppose themselves or their friends to be atheists, when they have merely outgrown the conceptions of God taught them in early life, and have found some difficulty in replacing them with higher and more satisfactory conceptions. Some people, however, have a temporary experience of real atheism. This is necessarily more or less painful, but the suffering is usually increased by a needless sense of guilt. Let us be very clear about one thing:

Atheism is not a sin; it is a misfortune. Suppose

you should overhear your little child in conversation with other children express doubts as to your goodness, justice, or even reality. What punishment would a five-year-old doubter deserve? A terrific beating? You smile, and your smile is my answer. So in the presence of the vastness of the universe, its conflicts and its mysteries, we are no better than tiny children. Suppose a mind, troubled by the irrationalities, the wrongs and the sufferings of the innocent, should express disbelief in the justice or existence of God, and suppose that you were God, what would you do to him? Would eternal punishment be a fit penalty? What good would that do except to show you as a ferocious monster?

In the preface to his "Back to Methuselah" Bernard Shaw has a suggestive chapter on "Defying the Lightning: A Frustrated Experiment." A story had been told of an atheist who took out his watch and challenged the Almighty to strike him dead in five minutes if He really existed and disapproved of atheism. Mr. Shaw said that if the experiment had not been tried, it ought to be tried, and he would try it there and then, and he took out his watch. The effect was electrical. The company was about to scatter. The host interposed and forbade the experiment. Those present were shocked at Mr. Shaw's seeming irreverence, yet he was the only man of faith among them. It is true he did not believe in a short-tempered and thin-skinned supernatural deity, while the rest were afraid of a God they believed capable of a wicked action.

The man who would beat his children for the very natural working of their minds would be an angel,

compared with a God who would inflict eternal suffering on His children because they became bewildered in their theological speculations. Jesus teaches precisely the opposite. He reminds us that the shepherd of one hundred sheep, if he lose one, leaves the ninety and nine and goes to search for the lost sheep in the wilderness, and rejoices when it is found. So, he says, God is like that. What is the atheist but a lost sheep? If Jesus' teaching be true, the atheist, the bewildered mind, the lost child, crying out in his heart for his father, would be the object of divine solicitude.

There are many who believe they have found a refuge from both dogmatism and doubt in agnosticism. They say that in view of the confusion of tongues, of the darkening of counsel and of the vastness of the universe, both in space and time, they cannot answer the religious question. They simply do not know. They suspend judgment. This is theoretically plausible and rational, but as a matter of fact, agnosticism is not practicable as a way of life. A forced option is before us. Life will not wait until doubtful theories are settled by science. In the next few years all of us must finish our work and depart. We must live as if theism were true or atheism were true. There are admitted difficulties on either theory. A belief in God must be held in the face of the problem of evil, of the mystery of suffering, and of the irrationalities and injustices that linger in the world; but a still greater difficulty faces the atheist, namely, the origin and existence not of evil, but of good.

On the atheistic theory, intelligent, self-sacrificing

men, drinking the hemlock and dying on crosses for their ideals, are the inexplicable product of the impersonal unconscious lifeless forces of the universe. How, we may ask, out of a purely physical order can a moral order arise? How out of the impersonal energies of the cosmos can arise the great company of men and women for whom some values are worth more than life, and who crave friendship with one another, and with the Eternal. The issue between theistic faith and the crude naturalism or mechanism that is the alternative, will not be settled by demonstration in our time. Religion chooses the adventurous faith in a God who is more and not less than our highest symbols—a faith in a world of increasing purpose, of progressive incarnation, where "All's love, yet all's law." The atheistic way has insuperable difficulties. It brings a sense of infinite loneliness for the present and a depressing outlook for the future. Those who in sincerity are compelled to accept it will go forward courageously and sadly, but without hope. Men do not sow wheat where they do not think wheat will grow. They do not try to raise strawberries in Greenland or water lilies in the desert. They will not enthusiastically engage in moral and spiritual enterprises if they believe that the universe is against them.

This is quite obvious to those who are acquainted with the views of modern writers on civilization. Those who have lost their faith in God see only gloomy prospects. They are often pessimistic and generally are without hope. Is not this inevitable? If the universe is the expression of unconscious, purposeless forces, or of a blind, groping will, what rea-

son is there to think our race can rise higher? It was, therefore, true insight which led one of the world's leading scholars recently to declare that "The fact of the religious vision, and its history of persistent expansion, is our one ground for optimism. Apart from it, human life is a flash of occasional enjoyments lighting up a mass of pain and misery, a bagatelle of transient experience." Those who see only the transient, superficial flux of things must always fall into discouragement, but religion brings hope and faith and courage because behind the outward show it sees the permanent satisfying reality.

The great tonic concept of God is therefore in every way central in importance for religion. For it, when it is lost or temporarily obscured, there is no substitute. If the universe is lifeless and meaningless, its grandeur is the more appalling. If a child should come home in the evening and search in vain through a great house for its parents, it would not be consoled by one who should say, "You have no father or mother, but see what a great house you live in and how richly furnished." The little one would be inconsolable. Its heart would cry out, "I want my father. I want my mother." So, when at Easter or at other times, we think of the hereafter, most hearts feel assured if they can believe in God, of Whose love our love is but a symbol. If God is, what is best for us will be. But if God is not, then death ends all, and fortunately, for who wishes to face a future in a godless, meaningless universe, empty of life and purpose and love? The poet's words are true:

"Life, death, and immortality,
Are in my thought of God."

This, then, is our situation. We must act now, in the living present, and with incomplete information. Life will not wait. The wise live by postulates and the just and the unjust live by faith. Life is a thrilling adventure. It is given to each of us to write before it the plus or minus sign. Those who take the way of faith, of Plato's trust in the reality of the Supreme Values, and of Jesus' faith in a goodness at the heart of the world, have been able to build lives of effort and action, of peace, health, and real happiness. In all life's perplexities, obscurities, and unmastered evils, they keep the victorious tone. They advance into the unseen with a cheer, saying with a hero of faith in the olden time, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

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The Significance of the Unitarian Movement

By

Reverend John H. Dietrich

No. 307

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American Unitarian Association
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The American Unitarian Association was Founded in 1825 with the Following Expressed Purpose

"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(The General Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, passed the following vote at Saratoga, N. Y., in 1894.)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man."

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with our spirit and our practical aims."

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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE UNITARIAN MOVEMENT.

I.

THERE are two ways of looking at any religious thought as it appears in history. One is to view it as a fixed type of opinion; the other is to view it as a phase in the development of religious thought. One sees it as the distinct form it has taken in creed or symbol as set forth by its recognized interpreters; the other sees it as a movement according to a certain principle, which began long before there was any record of it, and which will continue under one name or another so long as men think seriously on religious things. One is a study of a fixed type of thought or creed and the influence it has had upon the minds of men; the other is a study of an attitude of mind or principle as it has worked itself out in the various conditions of social life. The former has been much the more common. It deals with the idea of absolute truth and the faultless statement of it, which men have aimed at in religion. So we find the history of religious thought chiefly made up of the recital of creeds, with the stories of the controversies which have grown out of them, or which have been reconciled in them. It is even taken for granted that every religious movement must perforce express itself in such a creed. So to this day the question is asked, "What do Unitarians believe?" as if that

question were in any way concerned with the religious movement known as Unitarianism—a movement based upon a principle which by its very nature precludes any fixed doctrine or opinion, and which makes the question, "What do Unitarians Believe?" entirely irrelevant.

This is the one way of looking at religious history, which I might call the sectarian or dogmatic way. The other way is what, for distinction, I might call the scientific way; namely, that which we take as students of the laws of thought, or of religious development in a broad sense. In other words, it is the history of a movement based upon a certain principle, and not the history of a sect based upon a certain opinion. And when we come to study it in this way, we find that Unitarianism is simply an organized form in religion of that attitude of mind which has come to be called "Liberal," an organized form of the forward-looking mind as opposed to the backward-looking mind, of the progressing mind as opposed to the static mind. I do not mean to suggest that Unitarianism embraces the whole of this type of mind when brought to bear upon religious problems. It is simply one of a number of movements, but without question the most significant of these movements, which represent the liberal attitude in religion. Let me make this clear.

Some one has well said that the liberal, unlike the conservative or the doctrinaire radical, never places esprit d'corps or party loyalty above loyalty to the truth. This is true of the liberal in religion as well as in other fields of thought. He, too, places loyalty to truth above loyalty to creed or to sect. He knows,

therefore, that creeds are subject to constant change and sects to continual variation. He seeks always to systematize such views as may be held by the best authorities at any given time, but he regards them as evolutionary and fluid. He contemplates nothing as final. Liberal religion, therefore, is a progressive movement; and herein lies the difference between us and other religious bodies. Protestants in general assert and enforce a creed which is presented as a final statement of truth which one must believe to be saved; we place our emphasis upon a method of discovery, being always on the lookout for larger and clearer views of truth and duty. What seems essential to us is not any transient form of opinion, but the method of truth-finding which makes progress continuous. Christians defend the faith once delivered to the saints; but we earnestly listen to living voices for the revelation of a still more glorious gospel. Dogmatists decry innovations and stand guard on the ancient walls built around the teachings of a Luther, a Calvin, or a Wesley; but liberals, discarding the rusty armor and leaving behind crumbling traditions, keep in the open field and on the march, feeling that no one is so safe and so strong as he who is in pursuit of the truth. We move forever onward, not because we lack appreciation of past worthies and olden symbols, not because we are disturbed by doubt and distracted by uncertainty; but because we have confidence in man's ability to discover the truth and also because we have confidence in the leadership of truth under whose banner we march.

Men of this liberal type of mind are to be found in every part of the world and in every period of his-

tory, and wherever they have been found in one place in sufficient numbers, they have organized themselves into some kind of a religious organization. These organizations have been known by different names in different countries, although in most countries they are known as Unitarian; especially is that true in Great Britain and America. Now this name is more or less of an accident, and came as the result of a particular incident in the history of this movement. About one hundred and fifty years ago, the particular problem over which the liberals and conservatives in religion were in controversy was the problem of the Trinity. The liberals refused to believe in the threefold personality of God which involved the deity of Jesus, and insisted upon the unity of God which carried with it the belief in the pure humanity of Jesus; and these came to be known as Unitarians in distinction from Trinitarians, and they have carried with them ever since the name of this particular controversy. Therefore, the name is very inadequate to express the real idea of the Unitarian movement. And this I trust you will get clearly in mind. Liberal religion is a matter of constant adjustment of man's aspiration after the good to the growing knowledge of the world, and the continual application of this religion to the conditions of life determined by this growing knowledge. And it was this spirit of adjustment and application of religion to the latest results of human inquiry that animated the founders of Unitarianism. They were Unitarians and rejected the dogma of the Trinity because they were liberals and placed themselves under the command of reason, and accepted the modern discoveries of science and

history. Their disbelief in the Trinitarian formula was merely incidental to their attitude toward all problems of that time; but because of the heated controversy over the Trinitarian formula, they gladly took the name of Unitarians, and in spite of the constant agitation on the part of many to change it to one with a more adequate connotation, they hold that name to this day.

II.

In order that you may understand this connection between liberals and Unitarians, let me give you a brief resume of the situation. The New England colonists were largely Congregationalists, albeit Congregationalists of the purely Calvinistic type, and this type became the established church of Massachusetts. At the same time, there were more liberal types of Congregationalists as represented by the Pilgrims, who brought to America with them the parting injunction of their minister, John Robinson, that there was "more light to break forth from God's word," and a number of churches were organized by them. These flourished because the whole colonial atmosphere was that of freedom, and it could not be kept out of religious thought. And so, free from restraints of dogmatic creeds and tests, the New England Congregational churches were hospitable to inquiry and progress. Thus by imperceptible degrees, changes of opinion came; and at the beginning of the nineteenth century, one congregation after another began to declare for freer thought. In these, disbelief in the dogma of the Trinity became more and

more pronounced. In 1815 a controversy between Dr. William Ellery Channing and Dr. Samuel Worcester resulted in open rupture between the Trinitarian and the Unitarian Congregationalists. For ten years the controversy waxed hot, lines of separation were drawn, and men and churches took sides. It was Dr. Channing who became known as the leader of this new reformation and whose preaching of it was so fervent that many of the churches in Massachusetts became Unitarian. As the churches divided, the majority prevailing on one side or the other carried their name and property to the Trinitarian or Unitarian ranks, respectively. Meanwhile the seceding minorities organized anew on the one side or other. Thus the ancient parishes, each originally co-extensive with the town, were divided; and in many New England towns the oldest church became and is today in faith and fellowship Unitarian.

It should be understood that this division of the Congregational church was not of Unitarian seeking. The Unitarian leaders would gladly have stayed in the fellowship of Congregationalism if they had been granted sufficient freedom to hold their own opinions and to keep pace with growing knowledge. The necessity of separation was enforced by applying to them certain doctrines as tests of church membership. Even after the break had come, it was with no desire to build a new sect or to prolong the bitterness of the controversy that they went apart and worked in their own way. Their attitude was simply that of the right of individual opinion within a religious fellowship. But they believed in this right enough to propagate it, and so for purely missionary purposes they gath-

ered together in Boston and formed the American Unitarian Association. This organization is without ecclesiastical authority whatever. It is simply an association of free and independent churches for purely missionary purposes, using annual contributions from the churches and income from trust funds for publishing books and tracts, sustaining missionaries in new fields, aiding feeble churches, and planting new ones.

Without going into detail as to its growth and influence, I might say that there are nearly five hundred churches affiliated with this organization, some called by other names than Unitarian, of which at least half are in New England, chiefly in Massachusetts. These churches are absolutely free in doctrine and polity, so that they vary considerably, each church in its belief and in its practise being determined largely by the training which it has received from the pulpit. Some of them are not very far removed from the liberal type of Congregationalism, while others have discarded almost every vestige of traditional Christianity and are seeking to build a rational religion upon the foundation of the results of modern science; some cling to the theological interpretation of human experience while others have adopted a purely scientific attitude toward life; some are ardently theistic while others are enthusiastically humanistic. The denomination is rich in literature, having gathered within its fold most of the writers in America, especially in the realm of history and poetry. It carries on its rolls also an overwhelming proportion of the distinguished men and women of this country, when one realizes the comparative smallness

of the denomination. Its influence can by no means be measured by the number of members which it contains, partly because Unitarians are very loosely organized and uninterested in statistics and partly because its greatest influence has been outside of its own borders in liberalizing the other churches. As some one has said, "Unitarianism considered as a lump is very small, but considered as a leaven, it is vast and omnipresent. As an organism, it is feeble; as an influence, it is irresistible"; while another states, "There are more Unitarians, a thousand to one, outside of the Unitarian organization than inside of it." This is due partly to the fact that many do not care to bear the social stigma which the name Unitarian carries in the mind of the orthodox, and partly to the fact that people of this type of mind do not feel the same sense of obligation toward a religious organization as do those who believe that their soul's salvation depends upon such an affiliation.

There have been many, however, who have disregarded the stigma and who have had a sense of responsibility in the spread of this type of religion; and before I go on to discuss the principle underlying our movement, I wish to call your attention to a few names. I trust you will pardon me for this. I do it not in any display of vain glory. I wish simply that people may know—what only a few do know—who have been and are Unitarians in the realm of the world's literature and science and art and politics. There are hundreds of noted names in other countries, such as John Milton, Sir Isaac Newton and John Locke in England, who have been identified with the Unitarian movement; and there are hun-

dreds of others in this country who are entirely Unitarian in belief, such as, Benjamin Franklin, Abraham Lincoln and Thomas Edison; but I shall mention only those who have been formally connected with Unitarian churches.

First there have been five presidents of the United States—John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams, Millard Fillmore and William Howard Taft; and in connection with them an army of great statesmen such as John C. Calhoun, Hannibal Hamlin, Daniel Webster, Thomas Pickering, Edward Everett, Charles Sumner, Fisher Ames, John Andrew and a host of others; in addition there have been three Unitarian Chief Justices of the Federal Supreme Court—John Marshall, Joseph Story, and Mr. Taft. Practically all the great poets and literary characters of this country have been Unitarians—Bryant, Longfellow, Lowell, Whittier, Holmes, Emerson, Bayard Taylor, George W. Curtis, Helen Hunt, Thomas Wentworth Higgenson, Edward Everett Hale, Bret Harte, Richard Stoddard, E. C. Stedman, Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Thoreau, Louisa M. Alcott and many others. All the leading historians—Bancroft, Motley, Prescott, Sparks, Palfrey, Parkman and Fiske, were Unitarians. The educators like Horace Mann, Peter Cooper, Ezra Cornell, David Starr Jordan and every president of Harvard University from 1810 down to the present day; and the noted presidents of dozens of universities in this land. Great scientists like Agassiz, Pierce, Bowditch, and Draper were all Unitarians. Practically all the women who have attained national eminence have been Unitarians—Margaret Fuller, Lydia Child, Lucretia Mott, Helen Hunt

Jackson, Mrs. Livermore, Dorothea Dix, Julia Ward Howe, Charlotte Cushman, Maria Mitchell, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucy Stone, and Susan B. Anthony. And among the few supremely great preachers of America—Channing and Parker, Starr King and Robert Collyer. And the four noted people who have died within the last few years were Unitarians—Steinmetz, the electrician; La Follette, the statesman; Burbank, the scientist, and Eliot, the educator.

When you remember that our membership comprises about one two-thousandths of the population of the United States, that is, only about one in every two thousand people in this country is a Unitarian, the proportion of notable names in our fellowship is remarkable. Not long ago I went into the home of a fundamentalist which contained a picture of the group of six great American poets, and every one was a Unitarian. In a noted list of American literary men, four-fifths are Unitarians. In a history of education by a noted French author, the only two Americans named are both Unitarians. In a published list of twenty-five philanthropists and reformers in America, ten are Unitarians. In the American Statesmen Series of Biography, nine of the twenty-eight persons included are Unitarians. Of the one hundred hymns of Social Service recently published, sixty-four were written by Unitarians. In the Hall of Fame in New York stand the busts of the sixty-three most distinguished Americans. More than one-third of these, twenty-two, were formally identified with the Unitarian church and almost another third of them are people with Unitarian beliefs. And that you may know how Unitarians are held, when the

question of their religion is forgotten, I might remind you that in the city of Minneapolis, seventy-two public schools are named after people of national reputation, twenty-six of which were Unitarians, while twelve others were distinctly Unitarian in point of view but not members of a Unitarian society. I have spoken of these names that you may know the kind of men and women who have been connected with the Unitarian movement, because almost every week some one expresses surprise to me to find that a certain distinguished name in American history was Unitarian.

III.

Let us return to what I said at the beginning about studying the Unitarian movement, not as a sect with certain theological opinions, but as a principle of religious interpretation working itself out in history, and see if we can lay our finger upon that principle which has been the guiding force of Unitarianism through its whole career. I told you a few moments ago that the conspicuous leader in the great controversy which resulted in the founding of American Unitarianism was Dr. Channing. Not only does he stand out as one of the most eloquent preachers of all time, but it was he who gave utterance to the principle upon which Unitarianism was founded in those strenuous days of religious controversy in this country. It was about him that the religious liberals rallied and it was because of his preaching that they cut themselves off from the orthodox communion in the interest of a great cause. Now what was this

thing which fired Channing, who was so averse to controversy, with a zeal that set the whole country on fire, and which, though we have outgrown the doctrines held by him by one hundred years or more, is as fresh and important today as when he preached it. For the spirit of William Ellery Channing, the principle which above all else he held dear and always called the "sublime idea," the principle which I might say has caused Unitarianism to outgrow Channing's theology, became at once and has forever been the foundation stone of Unitarianism—I speak of the principle of religious freedom.

Nothing was so characteristic of Channing as his ardent never-fading love of liberty. Never did he falter in his struggle for liberty, and never did he deny to others what he treasured for himself. One of his biographers tells us that if we would understand Channing, we must consider him primarily as an apostle of spiritual liberty and study him as a preacher, a philanthropist and a theologian only in so far as those modes of activity stand related to the principle of spiritual freedom. For years he struggled that men might be free. He reverenced nothing more than the mind that was free. With passionate earnestness, he would cry, "I call that mind free which resists the bondage of habit, which does not content itself with an hereditary faith, which receives new truth as an angel from heaven, which is not imprisoned in itself or in a sect. I call that mind free which does not cower to human opinion, which respects itself too much to be the slave or the tool of the many or of the few, which guards its empire over itself as nobler than the empire of the world." He

insisted that if a man would be free, he must be steadily reaching out after new truth. He himself was steadily reaching out, discarding the old, taking on the new. He was never satisfied as one who had arrived, but spent his days,

"Yearning in desire
To follow knowledge like a sinking star
Beyond the utmost bound of human thought."

And this love of liberty, intensified by the entire process of his thought, made him distrustful of all sects. He even objected to having the liberal movement organize itself under the Unitarian name and thus become a separate religious body. He abhorred division and wished to unite with all who believed in truth and right. He would leave each individual free to think his own thoughts and speak his own word, and not let such freedom interfere with religious fellowship. "For myself," he said, "I wish to be regarded as belonging, not to a sect, but to the community of free minds, of lovers of truth. I desire to escape the narrow walls of a particular church, and to live under the open sky, in the broad light, looking far and wide, seeing with my own eyes, hearing with my own ears and following truth meekly, but resolutely, however arduous or solitary be the path in which it leads." He believed, therefore, in a church which should be wide enough to embrace all sincere men and women, regardless of their religious beliefs.

I have spoken thus of the underlying principle of the life and work of Channing, because it became the very foundation principle of Unitarianism, and the history of Unitarianism is simply the history of this principle applied to the religious life. Channing in

his lifetime was engaged in many great ecclesiastical reforms and profound theological controversies, but the distinctive message of this great prophet was not any particular kind of theology or ritual, but the fundamental right of religious fellowship to every man regardless of his theological ideas. And the same thing is true of Unitarianism today. It has steadfastly fought against all forms of ecclesiasticism and has persistently proclaimed against all doctrines of God and man which it has believed to be untrue and immoral, but the distinctive message of Unitarianism is this principle of religious liberty. To Channing there was something that was far higher and deeper and nobler than any matter of ritual or dogma; and just so Unitarianism is at bottom something far more than a denominational title, a sectarian form of organization, or an exact system of theology. Underneath all the surface battles against ecclesiastical forms and doctrinal errors which fill the pages of our history, there is this one fundamental message of religious freedom—the advocacy and defense of which has constituted within itself all of our distinctive message in the past, and will ever continue to be our message in the future, at least until its acceptance by the religious world as a whole.

It was to give expression to this principle of freedom in religious worship and work that the Unitarians became a separate body under the leadership of Channing; it was to give expression to this principle that the Unitarians amid persecution and loneliness have maintained a separate existence all these years; and it is to give expression to this principle that Unitarians exist today. Unlike any other move-

ment in religion with which I am acquainted, our movement is based, not on the principle of ecclesiastical authority as in the Catholic church, nor on the principle of doctrinal uniformity as in the Protestant church, but on this principle of liberty of worship and of thought. In all the history of Unitarianism, no man has ever been denied admission because of any belief or lack of belief, neither has any one ever been asked to subscribe to any theological or philosophical formula. Unitarianism simply asserts that any man, white or black, rich or poor, ignorant or educated, Jew or Gentile, bond or free, Christian or pagan, orthodox or heterodox, theist or atheist, is entitled to think as he sees fit and yet not be denied the right of religious fellowship. It asserts that every man has a right to enter into religious fellowship without being obliged to recognize the authority of certain officers or documents, and without promising to confine his search after truth to the limitations imposed by certain Roman bulls and Protestant creeds. It established a hundred years ago and maintains today amid the almost infinite variety of churches, one where a man may follow truth to the uttermost bounds and speak the truth as he finds it to the uttermost consequences and be responsible not to any outside authority, either ecclesiastical or biblical, but only to his own conscience.

It has always maintained an institution wherein a welcome is given to every man—honest, sincere, consecrated to the truth—whatever prophet he may follow, whatever scripture he may read, by whatever name he may call his god, in whatever language he may speak his prayers, in whatever doctrine he may

formulate the truth which he may happen to find. It brings to men the liberty to worship their own god in their own way without bowing to the authority of any pope in the vatican at Rome, the liberty to serve their fellows without being first obliged to give assent to certain technical theological doctrines, written by men who knew in their day far less about such things than we know today. To sum it all up in a single statement—here was the purpose of its founders and here is its mission today—not to establish any particular form of ritual, not to insist upon any particular statement of belief, not to build any particular institution, not to lay down any particular road to salvation; but to bring to men and women the great abiding truth of all the ages that the essence of religion is not the support of any institution, however sacred that institution may claim to be; not the acceptance of any creed, however authoritative that creed may appear; not obedience to the words of any prophet, no matter how inspired that prophet may have seemed; but that the essence of religion is simply the enrichment of human life; and to this end our mission is to demonstrate to the world that nothing is so sacred as the truth, nothing so divine as liberty.

It must be understood, of course, that this liberty for which we stand is not liberty merely for the sake of liberty; but liberty for the sake of finding the truth, of discovering reality, of seeing things as they are, of understanding the universe in which we are obliged to live; for we believe that the people will be more likely to find the truth if they are free to search for it than if they are threatened or frightened, or

if they are compelled to come to some pre-ordained conclusions that have been settled for them. Freedom then for the sake of finding the truth—this is the fundamental principle of Unitarianism. That is why no minister of the Unitarian fellowship is asked to subscribe to any doctrine, theological or philosophical. When a man applies for a position in the Unitarian ministry the questions asked are about his ability, his earnestness, and his consecration to the truth. The important thing is not what he thinks, but can he think. And that is why each Unitarian society guarantees its minister absolute freedom of thought and expression, because to deny the teacher the right to teach the truth as he sees it, is to deny themselves the opportunity to learn the truth. The very foundation stone of the Unitarian faith is the belief that truth should be taken as authority and not authority as truth. The only thing to which intellectually a free Unitarian can afford to bow is the truth.

In view of all that I have now said, it must be evident that Unitarianism cannot be viewed historically from the standpoint of a type of thought and that no man can speak authoritatively of the doctrines of Unitarianism; and Unitarianism cannot be judged by the teaching of any individual society, because each society has the perfect right to formulate for itself any creed it desires, to practise any ritual it pleases, and to establish any policy it sees fit. And yet there is a remarkable unanimity of opinion among Unitarians in general, in spite of this freedom. Of course, the interpretation which Unitarians place upon the great problems of existence is constantly

changing, because Unitarianism accepts as truth the demonstrated facts of science; and a religion which tries to keep abreast of science is constantly on the march. Therefore, the Unitarians of today teach very different things and emphasize very different problems from those of a generation ago.

"New occasions teach new duties, time makes ancient good uncouth;
They must upward still and onward who would keep abreast of truth."

These words by our own Mr. Lowell come as near expressing the very heart of Unitarianism as anything I know. For Unitarianism is an attitude of mind rather than a form of doctrine. It is that receptive attitude of mind which throws itself open to all progress in human thought with only one aim—the discovery of that which is real and true. Therefore, no one becomes a Unitarian or ceases to be a Unitarian because of any belief or opinion he may hold. He only becomes a Unitarian when he has the proper attitude toward truth, and ceases to be one when he loses this attitude, no matter how much he believes or disbelieves.

IV.

Is there any real need for such an institution in the world today? Men and women, there never was a time in the history of the world when there was so great a need for this thing as at this very moment! The old religion is breaking down on every hand; the old forms of worship and the ancient doctrines are losing their hold on the modern mind; the growing

alienation between the churches and the great body of intelligent people is the most conspicuous religious phenomenon of our time. Everywhere men are coming to feel that if they want to give themselves to the great work of seeking the truth, they must do this outside and not inside the church—hence the almost total disregard of organized religion by the scientists and scholars of today. Everywhere men are coming to feel that there is no reason why, as a preliminary to serving the crying needs of humanity, they must first recognize ecclesiastical forms which they cannot respect and assent to theological creeds which they cannot believe—hence the alienation from the church of the great majority of reformers and social workers. Everywhere men are coming to feel that religion as interpreted by the churches has no necessary connection with what they regard as the fundamental realities of present day civilization—hence the separation of the great masses of people from all the influences of organized religion. Everywhere men are coming to believe that to be interested in religion is to be interested in what is false or superficial or nonessential or unreal. And all because the churches insist upon clinging to the forms which pass and the beliefs which disintegrate, instead of the spirit which abides; insist upon affirming that there is no religion without the acceptance of those artificial conditions, in which men believe little and for which they care less.

And this leads me to the conclusion that there was never such need of our Unitarian movement as there is today. If religion is to endure, not as a survival of ancient custom, but as a living force in the de-

velopment of society, it must be freed from the superstitions which are today strangling its very life; it must be interpreted anew in terms of work and not of worship, in terms of life and not of belief, in terms of service among men and not of service before an altar, in terms of inward spiritual freedom and not of outward ecclesiastical authority. We are needed today as never before—and no fear of denominationalism, no sentimental love of church unity, no "mush of concession" as Emerson phrased it, must be allowed to turn us from the task which is this day laid upon our shoulders. We must proclaim to men everywhere that here in our Unitarian fold is a place where they may follow truth to its uttermost bounds and still enjoy the privileges of religious fellowship; all we ask is that they come with open minds, with loving hearts, with helping hands and with the spirit of good will.

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By Charles Edwards Park

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(*The General Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, passed the following vote at Saratoga, N. Y., in* 1894.)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man."

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AMERICAN UNITARIAN ASSOCIATION

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The Beauty of Holiness

By **CHARLES E. PARK**

II Corinthians V-14 "For the love of Christ constraineth us"

CERTAIN things interest us, but have no value for us. We may be interested to know that there are canals on Mars, or that Agesilaus, King of Sparta was lame. But it is hard to see just what value these things possess. On the other hand, certain things have value for us, but do not interest us. The fact that oxygen supports combustion, or that there is a law of gravity, are matters of the most immediate value to each one of us, but it is hard to feel any great amount of interest in these things. Once in a while we meet something that has both interest and value for us. And in that interesting value we find one of the potent agencies of life.

Personalities affect us in precisely the same way. Some are interesting but not valuable: some are valuable, but not interesting. We dismiss them both from a really serious consideration. But once in a while we meet a personality who is both interesting and valuable, and then we have to pause. There are plenty of people of whom our hearts instinctively approve. They have real charm of spirit and nature. They appeal to us and we feel

irresistably attracted to them. But they have no special value for us—in fact their value may be a minus quantity, on the wrong side of the decimal. Our minds are obliged to disapprove of them. They influence us the wrong way, so that we can never be with them any length of time without suffering a certain loss of moral dignity. And on the other hand, there are plenty of people for whom our minds are bound to feel nothing but admiration. They have an undeniable value for us, and for society. They are upright, well-intentioned, high-minded people, responsible, conscientious, endowed with real moral fervor. But somehow they fail to touch our hearts. We are not in the least interested in them: it may be that we are actually repelled by them. We find ourselves obliged to make Tom Brown's humiliating confession—

> *I do not love thee, Doctor Fell,*
> *The reason why I cannot tell,*
> *But this alone I know full well—*
> *I do not love thee, Doctor Fell.*

But once in a while we meet a man who makes an irresistable appeal in both respects: he commands the unqualified admiration of our minds because of the purity of his spirit and the nobility of his intentions, and at the same time he commands the passionate love of our hearts because of the charm of his nature, the generosity of his friendliness, the undefinable attraction of his personality. Such a man can never be dismissed from our consideration, can never be ignored. He is bound to be a power in the world. For he is an

interesting value. We see in him not only holiness and not only beauty, but the beauty of holiness.

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul writes a little sentence of seven words which hold for us a wealth of meaning—meaning perhaps that Paul himself did not intend and did not suspect. He says, "For the love of Christ constraineth us." It is curious that one who apparently knew so little and cared so little about the living man Jesus of Nazareth should have been able to hit off so accurately the place Christ holds in the hearts of his disciples and the influence Christ exerts upon the motives of his disciples. Without knowing it, Paul has mentioned the two most pronounced features in our relationship to Christ. We love him and yet we feel his constraint. He is to us an influence unto righteousness and at the same time he is a beloved influence. He appeals to the highest and purest manhood which our minds can recognize and approve, and at the same time he commands the deepest and warmest affection of our hearts. The result is that he embodies for us the holiness of life, but he also reveals that holiness to us in its beauty. He shows it to us not only as something ineffably valuable, but also as something irresistably interesting, so that we are led not only to admire it and approve it with the calm critical machinery of our judgment, but also to want it with all the ardor of our affection. For the love of Christ constraineth us. A great many men can offer us constraint, and a great many men can offer us love. But when those two vast influences are combined in one figure,

when he whom we cannot help loving with all our hearts is also he whom we cannot help admiring with all our minds, we are face to face with a power that lifts our human living to a higher plane. In the birth of such a man, our human history turns a corner. And in the life and influence of such a man, the canticles of our love and woe cease to be a mournful dirge and become a jubilant song.

Looking back over the history of man's moral progress, there are just three great stages that we can distinguish in the course of that long and tempestuous journey. Each stage is fairly distinct in thought if not in actual historical outline. And fortunately for us, each stage is dramatically symbolized by a fabulous but very concrete event. Thanks to these three symbolic events, our imaginations have in each case a definite nucleus of conception about which to assemble their understanding of that stage. The first stage of this long moral journey involves the recognition by man that his conduct may be divided into two kinds, classified under two heads. Some of it is good and some of it is evil. Man discovers a moral difference in his conduct—that it is either one or the other of two kinds, good or bad, high or low, fair or foul, divine or devilish.

The event which symbolizes that first discovery is of course the tragic episode described in the early chapters of the book of Genesis, where mankind, in the persons of Adam and Eve, living in a paradise of unmoral innocence, are led to taste

the fruit of the tree of knowledge, and have their eyes opened, and become as God, knowing good and evil, able to distinguish a difference between right and wrong. And as we read the story, it occurs to us how little it matters after all whether the story is historically true or not, whether the Fundamentalists are right or the Higher Critics are right. The important thing is that in one form or another the event must have taken place. There must have been some momentous occasion when man emerged from the innocence of the brute and became a moral creature, able for the first time to discover a difference between good and evil, and for the purposes of a symbol we might as well locate that moment in the Garden of Eden as any where else.

With that discovery there began the first stage of the moral journey. How long it lasted we do not know. What repeated experiments it witnessed we cannot tell. Doubtless there were innumerable attempts to discover by actual test the relative worth of good conduct and bad conduct. Doubtless the drama of Faust selling his soul to Mephistopheles, of St. Christopher seeking the service of the strongest master were many times enacted, in the effort to ascertain which it paid best to follow, the guidance of evil, or the guidance of good. But in the course of time man came to the second stage in his journey. The second stage begins with the birth of a sense of moral duty. Man discovers that as between right and wrong he has no choice. He is under obligation to choose the right. It is his duty, it is expected of him to

follow the guidance of the good. He may disobey if he is fool enough to insist, but there are prompt and terrible penalties awaiting his disobedience. This discovery is symbolized for us by the story of Moses ascending Mount Sinai to converse with Jehovah—to receive from him a statement of his Divine Will. With these commandments of God, graven on tablets of stone, Moses returns to the waiting tribes. Now they need no longer experiment with their moral values. Now they know. Now they are under moral obligation. "Thou shalt," and "thou shalt not," are absolutely unequivocal. Here again the important thing is not the details of the story, but the fact that in its essence it must have happened somewhere, and some time. The sense of moral duty must have come. When it did come it inaugurated the second stage of man's development.

In many ways, that second stage, when man feels himself under moral compulsion, and is actuated by an uncompromising sense of duty, is not a happy stage of the journey. There are many things about it that are noble—many things that are sublime. The outstanding spiritual products of that stage are character, self-control, loyalty, obedience to the voice of conscience, self-denial, self-sacrifice, the blessedness of persecution for righteousness sake— and these are splendid products. And yet there is about this second stage of duty something unduly austere, something undeniably sinister. It is poor in the element of happiness, of spontaneous joy. It has its Romance, but the figure of its Romance is a mail-clad war-

rior, whose radiant features are concealed within an iron helmet. The visor is down. The face is hidden. For the key-note of this second stage is conflict. The forces of self-will have got to be overcome. The standard of duty must be advanced.

All of us today are in this second stage most of the time. And most of us are in it all the time. We can bear witness of our own experience that we do not altogether enjoy it. There are many times, thank Heaven, when we can respond to its ringing summons—when we can put on its shield and buckler and fight the good fight with all our might. There are many times when we can sing ourselves into unison with its combative spirit.—"My soul be on thy guard, ten thousand foes arise." "Awake my soul, stretch every nerve, and press with vigor on." But there are also times when its burden of constant strife becomes unutterably irksome. We get so tired of this gadfly we call conscience, tired of an unrelieved sense of guilt, tired of realizing there is something still that we ought to do, some murmur of self-will that we ought to hush, some evil habit that we ought to overcome. Yes indeed, we get so weary of always being on the defensive, of always having a heavy task to accomplish, of always having a losing battle to wage, of always having an unrelieved posture of moral effort to maintain. And we ask with haggard eyes, is this the end of it all? Is our living at its best a warfare, from which there is no release?

It is with such natural and proper questions upon our lips that we come up to the very threshold of a third stage in our moral pilgrimage. For there is a third stage, and we are bound to say that this second stage of duty is an indispensable preparation for the third. It is a Valley of the Shadow through which we have to pass before we may sight the Delectable Mountain. It is a necessary foundation upon which alone we may build the higher stories of our spiritual edifice.

The third stage is revealed to us by little flashes of insight like the words of Paul, by little phrases of inspiration like the verse from the Psalm. It is revealed to us by the fleeting spirit of happiness that passes over our human life at Christmas time, like a pencil of sunlight that passes across a clouded landscape; by lives of radiant happiness that gleam in our humanity like nuggets of gold in the bed of a brook. Dwelling on these things we discover that there is such a thing as the combination of value and interest—that holiness need not coerce us by its sense of obligation, it can attract us by its inherent beauty—that the Christlike life need not constrain us by the voice of duty but rather by the voice of love. We discover that we do not have to do God's will, we can want to do God's will. We discover that we do not have to look upon life as an arduous warfare, as a heavy and irksome duty—we can lift it above the level of duty and make it a privilege. With that discovery we enter the third stage of our spiritual pilgrimage, wherein the right commands us not by authority but by attraction, where holiness ap-

peals to us not of moral necessity but by its own beauty, where we are constrained to follow Christ not by compulsion but by love, and where we live the life of God, not because we have to but because we want to.

And the event which symbolizes for us this third stage in our journey is the event with which our hearts and minds are preoccupied at this Christmas time: the birth of Him who showed the world that it is possible to know God as a Father, to share with Him his purpose, to think after Him his thoughts, to love Him and all his wishes and all his ways even as a son loves his father, and in that relationship to find life devoid of terror and devoid of its task, and filled instead with beauty and joy.

That is not an easy lesson to learn, but it is not an impossible one. In fact our annual Christmas time represents at its best and truest the deliberate resolve to learn that lesson, and for a few days at least to put it into actual practice. For as our hearts expand to the human kindliness of these days, to the trust and generosity, and hope and joy, and reverence and unalloyed friendliness with which the very atmosphere of Christmas is somehow impregnated, it is as though the whole earth were resolved to make an actual experiment of the spirit of Christ, and to live for these few days as veritable sons and daughters of God, and brothers and sisters each to the other, and see if what Christ found be not really true—that life need not be a task but may be a privilege, that to do God's Will because we love

Him and want to do his will, is better than to serve Him because of a stern sense of duty and because we dread his punishment, that to live together in trust and friendliness and helpfulness makes life happier and richer than to live in jealousy and suspicion. That is a lesson we can all learn. The mere fact that Christmas, beneath all its outward gaiety and confusion, comes to our thoughtful hearts with this deeper promise and diviner meaning, is a token that we welcome the lesson, and in God's good time shall learn it even as Christ learned it.

Understanding The Bible

By

Clayton R. Bowen, Th. D.

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Understanding the Bible

PART I

WHAT Religion is in itself no man finds himself able to say, though most men know what they mean when they use the word. More easily we can describe its manifestations or point out its embodiments. These are manifold, and ever new. Religion presses irresistibly for expression. It gives birth to theologies, to systems and creeds, to codes of conduct, to rituals of worship, to ceremony and sacrifice and prayer. It flows out into art and song and architecture; it creates sacred writings. But behind and above all such embodiments and testimonies remains Religion itself, never fully incarnated, never in its totality revealed.

While they are not the substance of Religion, all these expressions which it finds are truly sacred. They do enshrine the divine Presence. They make it real, accessible, apprehensible. Rite and liturgy and Scripture, temple, cathedral and doctrine: these are man's greatest achievements; they are the dwelling places he has made for God. No one with even the most elementary experience of religion will think save with veneration of any faith or rite or temple or book which for any

son of God has ever in any degree held the Father's presence. Chief among these hallowed shrines are the world's Scriptures, the deposit of religion in men's writings. Most of the world's great religions have "canons," or standard collections, of such Scriptures; some faiths, indeed, have come to assign such central importance to these writings as to merit and to receive the epithet "book-religions." Islam, or Mohammedanism, is an example; its Koran was in large part written down during the prophet's life-time, and was collected into some sort of standard and permanent form the year after his death. Here, then, is material that to all intents and purposes was Scripture from the time of its composition. Even more definitely certain modern writings were produced in order to serve as Scripture for a new religious movement. The "Book of Mormon," said to have been "found" by Joseph Smith in 1830, and "Science and Health," issued by Mary Baker G. Eddy in 1875, are familiar American illustrations.

In notable contrast to these writings which owe their very origin to an impulse to create Scripture stands the great bulk of the world's authentic Scripture, like the Vedas of the Brahmins, the Avesta of the Parsees, the Jewish and Christian Bibles. All these, and others like them, grew by slow process, bit by bit, into Scriptural status. They are made up of many writings, of many dates, of most diverse origin; they are collections of such products of the worship-life of a people as survive the centuries, and taking on a sanctity of association in the passage of years, become

"canonized" and set apart as sacred. Their compositeness of structure is usually the most obvious thing about them; no critic's eye is needed to see that they are not all of a piece, not issued as complete and ready-made Scripture. Their component documents began as writings like any other, and took their chances, with the others, of survival or oblivion. Oftentimes it seems as if only chance had kept certain sections in circulation until the period of canonization, while other parts, of obvious superiority, stood out in ever-increasing eminence as the generations passed. In the end the acceptance of these documents as Scripture was only a belated recognition of the status they had already won in the usage of the religious group, by their effectiveness in meeting its needs.

Such is the method by which authentic Scripture is made. Other more direct and conscious methods are artificial, whose product in the end does not ring true; psychologically it fails to meet the test. True Scripture, spontaneous outgrowth of the innermost life of a worshipping group, is one of the most precious and most potent possessions any religious communion knows. It has a thousand values; it wins and holds the interest of others, and so becomes a missionary force; it is the incomparable teacher and inspirer of each new generation among the believers; it gives assurance, consolation, encouragement, hope. It is a concrete symbol of the faith, a tangible nucleus for loyalty and devotion. But above all its other values is its value as a powerful expression of the social aspect of all religions. The Bible of Christians

serves us in many ways; in no way more indispensably than in keeping us aware of the large, the universal world in which religion has its home. Nowhere so perfectly as in Scripture does the Church maintain her unbroken connection with the sacred past, and express her proud consciousness that she is not merely a chance and fleeting gathering, with no memory of a yesterday and no dream of a tomorrow, but a fellowship of the spirit venerable and undying. The reading of Scripture in our church service is not the imparting of a "lesson," in the sense of instruction; the word "lesson" in this connection is used in the sense of its original Latin form *lectio,* a reading. The reading is an act of worship (all the better if it be responsive, as we read the Psalms), wherein we assert our oneness with the generation out of whose experience were born these hallowed words, and with those succeeding generations of sacred association whose pious usage baptized them and made them Scripture.

This sense of solidarity with an age-long aspiration cannot be lacking in any communal form of religion without grave loss; Scripture gives it as nothing else does. Essential to the definition of Scripture is its conception as venerable, traditional, hallowed by time and associations. It is precisely these centuries of association that make the difference between Scripture and edifying literature. Nothing can take their place; the result can be achieved in no other, briefer, more direct and deliberate fashion. It is a failure alike to understand history and psychology which sometimes

says, "I will read in church this recent poem or essay, and lo, it shall become Scripture." If well chosen, such reading may edify or instruct, but it remains at best homily or preaching. Nor did anyone, despite Joseph Smith and Mrs. Eddy, ever successfully declare, "Go to, I will write Scripture." The attempt so to manufacture the sacred word is always an instructive failure. Scripture is a social phenomenon and its production is always a corporate act, involving not only a multiplicity of persons, but generations of persons. *Only that which is in some sense the product of the group mind can become the vehicle of group worship.* It is no accident that most of the books of our Bible are compositions editorially made up from the contributions of several writers. Even where the production of one man is canonized (Paul's letters form the best example), it must pass through the experience of one, two or more generations before it can become sufficiently the expression of the common worshipful impulse to serve as Scripture for the group. This passage through the social medium not infrequently leaves traces in the text of what the individual wrote; it always leaves traces in the way in which it is read by the worshippers. It no longer says to them precisely what it was written to say to its contemporaries. It will assuredly say both more and less. It has gathered up larger significances; local and temporary meanings have silently dropped away. It is no longer, to take an example, simply a letter to a church at Corinth, no longer in reality a letter at all. It is an authentic medium of the group-consciousness;

in a word, it is Scripture. Thus it matters little what type of document it was at the start. All sorts of writing may undergo the hallowing transformation; Scripture, like politics, makes strange bedfellows. Productions as diverse as the Song of Solomon and the Epistle to the Galatians may in the end come to lie peaceably side by side in the same canon. And that by good right; they are unified by a bond of social psychology which, though it defy the critic or the rationalist, is a matter of course to every one who knows religion as a social experience. It is a common fallacy to define Scripture as equivalent to "devotional writing." It is seldom or never primarily devotional, often not devotional at all. Our own Bible has primitive history, codes of civil law, sanitary regulations, political speeches, letters, chronicles, and other materials to which only the associations of usage have lent devotional character. So with other Scriptures; rarely do they contain the devotional classics of any religion. Our own devotional classics, like *The Imitation of Christ,* are read in the closet when the door is shut, not publicly as an act of communal worship. They are the outpouring of the individual heart, not the voice of the group and the centuries.

We cannot therefore criticize Scripture at its face value, as many do, in painfully pointing out its inferiority to modern productions. Scripture is like the faded and tattered battle-flag which aged men in blue touch with reverent fingers, whose values are precisely in its rents and stains, the marks of its history. It is not prized as a bit

of bunting, of excellent quality and attractive color; nor do we offer the veteran in its place a shining new banner fresh from the shop. Much criticism of Scripture is as unintelligent as that. The Church, at least in its wiser moments, makes no claim that these are the best books, as books; she knows only that they are her books, part of her own life. She reads them as the mother reads the childish scrawls she long ago received from her boy at school, or the lonely man the faded and tear stained letters of the lost love of his youth. These letters may be void of significance to all the world beside; to those who read they are sacred. So Scripture is sacred; the associations which made it so are the associations of *our* history,*our* spiritual ancestry, *our* family tradition. We may drop absolutely the whole dogmatic idea of the Bible's supremacy without in the slightest degree weakening the hold which it has on the hearts and minds of Christians. For that hold, though often expressed in terms of doctrine, was never dogmatic, but always psychological, a matter of experience.

It is with the Christian Bible, then, that we concern ourselves. It comes to us in two parts, commonly bound together; where either section is issued separately, it is always specifically designated as only part of the complete Bible. These two parts the early Latin church called *Testaments,* that is, writings embodying a covenant or agreement between man and his God, and we have kept the term until today. One of these parts is written in the Hebrew language of the ancient

Jews; it consists, as we have it, of thirty-nine separate "books" or writings, all of which are older than the Christian era. The other part, containing twenty-seven writings, all in the Greek language, is less than one-third the length of the Hebrew portion, and clearly had its origin in the early years of the Christian movement. It has come to be called, therefore, the New Testament, and the other, the Old. It is obvious that its twenty-seven separate documents were written at different times, and only after all had appeared and were in use in the churches were they collected into the canon of the "Testament" as we have it today. Clearly, until the Church as a whole had some consciousness of a new Testament, its one canon of Scripture, its Bible, was what it later came to call the Old Testament. Certainly no first century Christians who used the word "Scripture" or "Bible" could mean anything by it save the Hebrew canon which they had inherited from the Jews. That was Jesus' Bible, that was Paul's Bible, that was the Bible of the apostles.

We turn, then, to the Bible of Jesus and his first followers. What can we know of it? Was it precisely identical with the "Old Testament" we use today? Perhaps the best answer we can give to this question is contained in the familiar words which follow the "Golden Rule" in Matthew 7:12: "for this is the Law and the Prophets." Clearly Jesus is here meaning, "for this is the substance of what our Scripture teaches." For "our Scripture" he says "the Law and the Prophets" as we might say, "the Old Testament

and the New." His Bible, then, like ours, has two parts. The first part, "the Law," as a glance at a Jewish Bible (an excellent edition, in English translation, was issued by the Jewish Publication Society in Philadelphia in 1917) will show us, was what we call by the Greek word Pentateuch, the five "books of Moses," Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. "The Prophets" of the Jewish Bible include some works we Christians do not today class as prophetical, and in an arrangement unfamiliar to us. This division has eight "books," namely, Joshua, Judges, Samuel (I and II together), Kings (I and II together), Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve (the minor prophets as one). The Hebrew Bible as we know it has also a third division, spoken of as "the Writings," which includes the Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra-Nehemiah (as one), and Chronicles (I and II together). These eleven, with the eight "Prophets" and the five "Books of the Law" make up the twenty-four books of the Hebrew canon; it is the number of letters in the Hebrew alphabet. The "Writings," as such, are not referred to by Jesus or by any New Testament writer, as both "Law" and "Prophets" are, though all the separate works appear in reference or citation somewhere in the New Testament except Ezra, Esther, Song of Solomon and Ecclesiastes. Especially common are references to the Psalms (about two hundred) and the Book of Daniel (about seventy). The "Law," however, is appealed to almost three hundred

times, and the "Prophets," individually or collectively, nearly five hundred times. It is clear that "the Law and the Prophets" are pre-eminently the Bible of the Jews, although the third group of writings is recognized and in part much used. The clearest reference to it in words ascribed to Jesus is in Luke 24:44, "the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms."

If we go back a couple of centuries we come upon an interesting work called "The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach," or, more briefly, "Ecclesiasticus," written in Hebrew about 200 B.C. and translated into Greek by the author's grandson some seventy years later. In the translator's preface he alludes several times to the Jewish Bible of his time, using the words, "the Law" and "the Prophets" and "the other books of our fathers" or some similar phrase. Here apparently we have the "Writings" as a part of Scripture, though somewhat less clearly conceived, less highly rated, than the other two groups. Still, their recognition is more positive than it is in the New Testament; the difference is that Ecclesiasticus is a product of the Jews living in Egypt whereas Jesus and his first followers belong to Palestine. The Palestinian canon, in the original Hebrew, which Protestantism inherited, was always smaller in extent than that of the Judaism scattered in the outside world, which mostly used the Greek language. The canon of the Greek translation of the Old Testament has been followed by the Roman Catholics, whose Bible is larger, therefore, than that of the Protestants. Some Protestant Bibles print the

extra books, under the title of "Apocrypha," after the Old Testament. It is only natural that the "Writings" then, should be accepted as a part of the canon outside of Palestine before they reached this status among the more conservative Palestinians. In Jesus' time most of them were widely used and venerated in the home-land, and just on the verge of being treated as Scripture like the books of law and prophecy.

To a date some two hundred and fifty years earlier than Ecclesiasticus belongs a scene pictured in the book of Nehemiah, whose eighth chapter gives a graphic account of the solemn reading of "the Law" to the people, a ceremonial lasting seven days. The account contains frequent references to the material of "the Law" thus read, which include allusions to all "five books of Moses," and to no other identifiable writing. There is nowhere in Nehemiah any allusion to "the Prophets" or to any Scripture other than "the Law." The Jewish Bible has at this point, then, but one division. The gradual collecting of the prophetic material into a second division followed slowly in the next two centuries. As we have just seen, the production of the "Writings" and their coalescing into a third division came later still, more rapidly among the non-Palestinian Jews, more slowly in the fatherland itself.

The beginning of the process of making the "Old Testament," then, is substantially the promulgation of the "Law" by Ezra the Scribe about 450 B.C. (All these dates are of course only approximate; no exact calendar existed and no exact

dates are given in the ancient sources). This "Book of the Law of Moses" (Neh. 8:1) or "Book of the Law of God" (8:18) was to all intents and purposes our "Pentateuch," considered as a single connected work. But we know that the Pentateuch is not a single connected work; our Bible divides it into five separate volumes, and any careful reading of it will show that it is in truth a compilation of a considerable number of earlier documents, of different dates and origins. It is as if one should weave together strands of red, blue, purple, gold and green into a long rope, and then should cut the rope into five lengths. That the five pieces made originally one rope would be evident; that each piece is composite within itself would be no less evident. So scholars have patiently untwined the separate strands and have printed these opening books of our Scripture with each source in ink of a different color—the so-called "Polychrome Bible." Now anyone who will attentively read the end of Deuteronomy and immediately go on with the opening chapters of Joshua will see that our rope was originally cut into six lengths, that Joshua was a part of it. The scholars say therefore that the complete editorial compilation which was the first Hebrew Bible was a "Hexateuch," rather than a "Pentateuch." But with the return from exile and renewed stress upon the commandments of God for the people's life, the closing portion, being chiefly narrative, was in usage omitted from the collection and all attention centered on the portions which embodied the Law. The severed story of Joshua was thus left free to become, later

on, the first document in the second collection, "the Prophets."

The separation of the Pentateuch, not into five "lengths," but into its parti-colored strands, is a task for scholars who study the work in the original Hebrew, with all the resources of learning. These strands are marked almost as clearly for the intelligent student of the text as if they were literally printed in various colors. The Polychrome Bible only reveals to the eye of the ordinary English reader what the Hebrew text itself reveals to the eye of the scholar. Differences of judgment in the analysis there must necessarily be; but as to the existence of these separate strands there is no longer any real question. In the main, four strands reveal themselves. First, a résumé of Hebrew history and traditional laws, written sometime in the ninth century B.C., which, because it uses the name Jehovah (or its Hebrew equivalent) for God, and because its writer belonged to the kingdom of Judah, scholars generally designate by the symbol J. Then, not much later, in the same century, another narrative of the same general character, whose writer, apparently an Ephraimite, uses the Hebrew word Elohim (God) instead of any name for the divine Being; this, then, scholars designate by the letter E. Somewhere about the middle of the seventh century B.C. a fresh codification of the laws appeared, which we still possess, embodied in a document appropriately labelled by the Greek-speaking Jews Deuteronomy, or "Second Law." Somewhere about 500 B.C. a priestly formulation of the law,

with special concern for the temple and the ritual, appeared, in a frame-work of historical narrative. This is what scholars mean by P. It was the weaving of these four main sources together, with whatever editorial work was necessary, that made the Hexateuch. With the completed work, embodying the contributions of all, the separate documents (like most of the rest of the early Hebrew writings) passed out of existence. It was to no one's interest to spend the time and labor to copy out by hand the imperfect parts, with the complete whole available for use. We can today recover these earlier documents only conjecturally, by analysis and reconstruction, in which there must always be a great element of uncertainty. But that the four documents are there, embedded in the Bible we buy today fresh from the shop, like quartz pebbles embedded in a New England boulder, is fortunately clear. They are characterized, as Professor Briggs says, by "differences which are no less striking than those which characterize the four Gospels." And all this is religiously the greatest gain. The Bible is a richer, more helpful volume when we see it thus reflecting the experience of generations of the growing consciousness of God and of his dealings with men through the centuries. As the product of one mind, in one place, at one time, the Pentateuch would testify to a sporadic and monumental genius; in its true origins it testifies to something far more inspiring, to the soul of a people in its growing experience, deepening devotion, increasing sense of the de-

mands of religion on the life of man. Its very compositeness makes it Scripture.

The work and utterance of the great prophets of Israel had preceded the return from exile which was signalized by the promulgation of the Law by Ezra about 450, but it was not until later that the surviving record of their word, whether oral or written, was collected in documentary form. The earliest of the prophets was probably Amos (about 750 B.C.) so that the substance of the book bearing his name is really the oldest document in our Old Testament. After him, but probably still in the same century, followed Hosea, Isaiah, Micah. Early in the sixth century came Jeremiah, Ezekiel following within the next fifty years, and Haggai and Zechariah belonging to the later years of the same century. Malachi seems to be a fifth-century prophet. The dating of the other prophets is less certain and less important. In any case, to date the man and his work is not to date the writing or editing of the book which now bears his name, or its inclusion in a "canon" of works used as Scripture. Such historical narratives as Judges, Samuel, Kings, (these latter two only later divided into "First" and "Second"), were compiled from existing chronicles, and the great messages of the prophets, some already written down, others surviving in oral tradition, were similarly edited into permanent documentary records of the will of God, not as codified into Law, but retaining its native form of stirring rebuke and appeal. We may be sure that this work of compilation operated with diverse and often frag-

mentary materials, and that what in the end was canonized as "Scripture" was not a series of complete "books," each the work of one author at one time, but rather a complex deposit of the experience of many minds that sought God, the strivings of many generations that sought to walk in his ways. These blended strands are apparent, as always, to the trained eyes of the scholars, who find, for example, the contributions of at least two later prophets grouped with those of Isaiah, and everywhere traces of the nameless editors who rescued and preserved for future generations the fugitive records of the great teachers of Israel. The whole Bible becomes richer, fuller of meaning and of spiritual suggestiveness, when we thus look below the surface of what our twentieth-century publishers give us, and see something of the great dramatic interaction of the divine and the human out of which the Scripture was produced and came to be so great a power in the life of man.

The third division of the Jewish Scripture, "the Writings," not fully canonical in Palestine until after New Testament times, gives fewer indications of the history through which it passed on its way to Scriptural status. Naturally enough, most can be known about the first and most important of its eleven divisions, the book of "Psalms" (a Greek word meaning "Hymns"). As its title shows, this is a hymn-book; its text is therefore in the form of poetry. The English "King James" Bible unfortunately obscured most of the literary features of the originals it translated; the Revised Versions (particularly the

American) preserve much more of this. Thus the Revised Versions show us that in the Hebrew Bible the Psalms are divided into five separate books, much like (as has been suggested) five successive series of "Moody and Sankey" Gospel Hymns. Just as many of these latter owe neither words nor music to either Mr. Moody or Mr. Sankey, so the majority of the five series of "Psalms of David" neither have nor claim any connection with the famous minstrel-King. Book I contains the first 41 psalms; Book II psalms 42-72; Book III psalms 73-89; Book IV psalms 90-106; Book V psalms 107-150. Some psalms appear in more than one book, as modern hymns do, usually with some revision. Psalm 53 (from Book II) repeats with only slight alteration psalm 14 (from Book I). So Psalm 70 (Book II) is simply five verses (13-17) out of psalm 40 (Book I). Psalm 108 (Book V) is a combination of five verses (7-11) of psalm 57 with eight verses (5-12) of psalm 60 (both Book II). These and similar observations show that the five psalm-books were edited in different periods of the nation's life, while the dates of the single psalms are of course still more diverse. Some are clearly as late as the second century B.C. Not until about 150 B.C. at least were all of them extant and collected into the five series we know today.

In general, the works collected in "the Writings" are later than the materials in "Law" and "Prophets." Job, a magnificent poetic drama, one of the great literary achievements of antiquity, comes probably from the fourth or fifth century

B.C. The Proverbs collect the sayings of many wise men down to perhaps the third century, when the work appeared, based quite certainly on earlier briefer collections, some of which seem to have borne the name of Solomon. One needs only to read the Old Testament for himself to see how the traditional connection of Solomon with the Proverbs, like that of David with the Psalms and of Moses with the Law, originally applies to a primitive and brief portion of the whole, around which, as a nucleus, the rest collects. The Song of Solomon, in form a poetic drama; the story of Ruth, a charming idyl; Lamentations, a powerful poetic dirge; Ecclesiastes (Greek for "Preacher"), a pessimistic philosophic sermon; Esther, an interesting tale which has no mention of God and no specific religious content; these five, in the Hebrew Bible from which we borrowed them, form a group, called the "Rolls," read at the great festivals of the Jewish church year. They all have distinctly a literary self-consciousness, and all are relatively late in origin. We may recall that in the original Jewish Bible I and II Chronicles form one continuous work, as do Ezra and Nehemiah. If we read these two together, we will see further that originally they made but one, though now cut into four. The style and language of Chronicles, as well as its narrative, are continued in Ezra-Nehemiah, and we can notice how when the latter portion was broken off to make a separate work, it was necessary to repeat the last two verses of Chronicles to make a suitable beginning for Ezra. The whole

work was probably not complete before 350 B.C. Its division into lengths, two in the Hebrew Bible, four in the Greek, Latin and English translations, was of course later still. The story of Daniel and his visions, which contrary to popular opinion, does not purport to be the work of its hero, clearly reveals its origin in the days of the great persecution by the Syrian emperor Antiochus Epiphanes, about 165 B.C. It contains a few Greek and many Persian words and a large part of it is written in Aramaic, the language which after the exile gradually supplanted the classic Hebrew among the Jews and in the time of Jesus was their common spoken tongue. Daniel is probably the latest of the Old Testament writings.

From even this brief survey we can see that the half of our Bible which we have taken over from the Jews is a far more universal and impressive creation than the traditional view of uninstructed Christianity has made it. Its writing covers the span of almost a thousand years; its editing into "canonical" form almost half that period. It gathers up into itself the aspirations and glimpses of truth, the highest moral impulses and noblest thoughts of God, of thirty generations, from the primitive pictorial imaginings of a higher world to the loftiest reflections of the most impassioned prophet, from a dim reverence before holy trees and stones to the glorious communal worship of the Psalms. It is the epitome of the religious life of a race; yes, of *the* race, and in some sense, of each man also. Read understandingly, it reveals the age-old problems

which beset us all, faced and fought out by men who were ignorant of many "facts" which every schoolboy among us knows, but who knew the great essentials of life, the worth of moral integrity and the way to its attainment. We see a great cloud of witnesses, many men at work in the production of this great treasure of the spirit, humble men, nameless men, unconcerned to perpetuate their own personal connection with the process, concerned only to make available for new generations of their beloved race the highest reaches of their ancestors' moral and spiritual wisdom. There is no sense of literary property; here is a precious possession of the people, for the people, by the people. Pass it on; transmit it in ever fresher, more effective form; let it grow by accretion of the best contributions of the wisest minds; take up into it the pleadings of the prophets as they come; the choruses of praise that succeed one another in the temple ritual. Add the great poems, the profound dramas, the reflections of the philosopher, the pithy comments of the sage; the dreams and visions of the seer have their part, the moralizing legends of the wandering teller of tales, the general confessions and dirges of lamentation in the day of trial. Slowly, as Emerson would put it, the Bible of this great race is writ; slowly it is canonized, not by arbitrary vote of law-givers, but by the experience of a people through whom it passes, in whose lives it lives, by whose associations it is hallowed. We today, for whom the Bible is an infinitely more wonderful book than ever it was to earlier gener-

ations that knew nothing of its inner history, that had only the hard and fast doctrinal theory of its mechanical production, we owe to the scholars who have by their patient and often ill-requited labors opened to us its true greatness, a debt of gratitute we can repay only by trying to share with others, as widely as we may, the insight they have given us.

PART II

When we turn to the second, and smaller, division of our Bible, we are on far clearer ground. Though there are problems in plenty, they do not compare with those the Hebrew Scripture presents. Instead of covering nearly a thousand years, the New Testament material covers less than a hundred, and that a century within historic times, abundantly illuminated by contemporary historic records. The New Testament is written in Greek, a language easily read; not in the obscure east, but in the comparatively well-known Roman empire. Its writers are relatively few, traditionally but eight, at critical most not more than twice that. Only one third of the documents are anonymous; of a considerable number the authorship and approximate dating scarcely admit of doubt. The earliest of these writings are letters of the apostle Paul, bearing his name, which began to appear about the middle of the first century. By the middle of the second century the latest was in circulation. By the end of the second century, a Christian "canon" was formed; the Church had a "New Testament," though not all our twenty-seven writings were in it, nor were its contents standardized, so as to be the same in all sections of the Church. There were collections of Paul's letters quite probably before the year 100; there were gospel-collections not long after 100; all through that second century there

was going on among the Christian writings a process of natural selection and unification. The canon was finally settled, not by vote of the Church in solemn assembly, but by the gradual approximation of the churches to a common usage. For one or another reason, not in every instance perfectly clear to us, certain writings attained an esteem and a wide-spread use which others failed to achieve. Some works, much read for a time, later became less popular and disappeared; others, much favored in particular localities, were not valued elsewhere, and so failed of final inclusion in the common collection. Here and there, local synods and councils passed resolutions recognizing certain writings as canonical within their own territory; but such votes were always only the recognition of an existing situation, never the creation of a new status. The first council recorded as thus adopting precisely our present New Testament canon of twenty-seven books is one convened in 393 A.D., under the leadership of the great Augustine, at Hippo in North Africa, where he was bishop. This of course regulated the usage only of the churches of a particular territory. Indeed, not until the council of Trent, in 1546, was there passed a decree supposed to be binding on the whole Church, fixing the canon in its familiar form. This decree, too, was but a belated recognition of a long-standing status, and it was issued after the Eastern Church and the Protestantism of Europe had passed beyond its jurisdiction. Luther and the chief scholars of his time were rereading the New Testament with fresh eyes and in

the light of other Christian writings, and were raising again long-forgotten questions about the actual status of this or that separate document.

The so-called "Revelation" of John, for example, was a production the justification of whose position in the canon had never been apparent to all. In ancient days the Eastern church (where it originated!) had never liked it, and it was only the powerful and growing influence of Rome, where it was popular, that secured its final acceptance. The Syriac churches in reality never included it, nor was it found in the translation of the New Testament made for the Goths. Martin Luther viewed it with great distaste, going so far as to declare that "in it Christ is neither taught nor recognized." The Swiss reformer Zwingli said of it roundly, "It is not a Biblical book," and John Calvin wrote a "Commentary on the New Testament" without reference to it. The "Epistle of James" was another work whose canonical position was always doubtful, from the Church fathers down. Luther's description of it as "an epistle of straw" is well known. Yet the Protestant church as a whole, feeling the need of a firm foundation in an infallible book, now that they had thrown over the reliance on an infallible Church, laid aside such independent judgments, and accepted the inherited canon with the traditional views as to the origin of its several parts.

To those component parts we may now turn. The New Testament, as we have it, is made up of four sections, each presenting a different kind

of document. There is, first, "the Gospel," in fourfold version. (Not, be it noted, four Gospels, but *the* Gospel, according to four expounders. The American Standard Version brings this out clearly in its titles). Next we have the Acts or Activities of the Apostles, a companion narrative carrying on the account from the point where the Gospel ends. There follows a collection of letters, fourteen traditionally ascribed to Paul, seven whose titles include other apostolic names. Finally, we have a writing of a wholly different type, called in the Greek Apocalypse, in the Latin (followed by the English) by the equivalent Revelation, purporting to be the work of a not further identified John. Gospel, Apostolic Acts, Letters, Revelation, these four; and the greatest of these is the Gospel. That is why it stands first in the collection; it is the groundwork of the whole. Of its four canonical versions, the one labelled "Matthew" has been most popular from the first, and so is given the foremost place. The order of the others varies somewhat in the old manuscripts; the common order perhaps puts "John" at the end as always understood to be the latest written. The story of the apostolic mission forms the natural bridge from the story of Jesus to the apostolic letters, and provides for the latter the fitting background. Of the letter-writers, Paul is supreme both in quantity and quality; of the thirteen or fourteen letters supposed to be his, Romans stands first as longest and as sent to the chief of churches. The others follow according to length (save that II Corinthians naturally stands after

I Corinthians), the tiny note to Philemon bringing up the rear. An apparent exception is the position of Hebrews, after Philemon, though in length it comes between I and II Corinthians. This merely reflects the continuing indecision as to its authorship; standing where it does, it may be taken either as the last in the Pauline group or as the first of letters by other apostles. These latter in turn follow according to length, and the Revelation closes the collection as a whole.

The order is logical but not chronological. The earliest of these documents are the letters of Paul. Springing out of his active missionary career, they were probably all written in the decade from fifty to sixty A.D. At least this dating is approximately correct, and coming from the Old Testament, where even centuries are hard to fix, to settle upon the approximate decade seems very precise indeed. Paul was a Christian for something like the last thirty years of his life, and during all that time he was a valiant worker for the extension of the faith of which he had formerly made havoc. It is a mistake to think of him, as many seem to do, as primarily a letter-writer. Suppose he wrote fourteen letters, or fourteen times fourteen, what is that out of an activity of thirty years? Any modern missionary or field agent writes more than that in a week. Paul was first and foremost a mighty man of action, and his letters are merely incidental, stop-gaps to deal provisionally with a situation till he could come and settle it in person. One of his letters—to Corinth—he confesses that he afterwards regretted having sent; of none of

them would he think as the real medium of his dealings with his churches. Yet to us they are of supreme value. They are unique among all the letters of the antique world. It is difficult to believe they were written so long ago. No product of the eighteenth century is so near us. They are still alive, and throb with the passion of a great man's heart; they are still warm with the glow of his enthusiasm and affection; they still command with their moral authority; they still touch our sympathies with their very human pain and bring the mist to our eyes when the writer smiles bravely through his tears. No such spontaneous, powerful, emotional outpourings are elsewhere found in antiquity, scarcely any in later times. They are unstudied, almost always (save for Romans, in large part) motived by strong feeling which stays not for the niceties of rhetorical and grammatical accuracy; sometimes sharp and scathing, sometimes melting and tender, never withheld till he could "think it over" and decide just what it were wise to write, but poured out at white heat. We see the author at times laboring to find a theoretical argument to enforce an obvious practical point, sometimes falling into the artificialities of his rabbinical training, but never lingering on these lower levels, sure to soar not many sentences on into supreme and lyric assertion of the great things of the spirit.

Nothing more human has ever been written than these letters, scarcely anything more divine. And yet they were but by-products of the man's personal activity! To have known him! We

cannot wonder that when he was claimed by death his letters came to assume such supreme place in the Church. Their collection was the first Christian canon, the nucleus of all the rest. Through them he still lived, and the mark of their influence lies clearly across much later Christian writing. The letter-form became a favorite way of addressing the Church, and letters most like those of Paul in character, style and phraseology were surest to be effective. There were from the late first century on more "Pauline" letters than Paul had personally produced. Many of these, once read and valued under his name, dropped out of common use before the canon grew fixed, and survive, if at all, only as names, or in fragmentary quotations, or at best as obscure "apocrypha." But the student who venerates Paul enough to study his writings with close and conscientious care cannot refrain from raising the question whether the unsystematic, largely unconscious fixing of the canon infallibly kept only such letters as were Paul's own, dropping all such as were merely "Pauline." Certainly, critical considerations as to the evidence of genuineness were never the deciding factor. For us all as churchmen, the canon is a given reality on which the generations of believers have nourished their faith. For us as students, it answers no questions as to authorship or date or purpose. Studying the group of fourteen letters which the Latin Bible of the middle ages attributed to Paul, it was easy enough for scholars who cared enough for the great apostle and his work to wish to know the truth, to see at

once that "Hebrews" had another origin. It makes no claim to be Paul's, was not so considered by the more instructed leaders of the early Church, is wholly unlike his writing in style, phraseology and matter. Let it remain in its dignified anonymity. Though, as the great Christian father, Origen, said early in the third century, "God alone knows who wrote it," it is one of the noblest products of the primitive church, and in the highest degree worthy of its place in the list of her most precious archives. In form (save for the closing verses) it is sermon rather than letter, and probably had its origin in oral utterance before it began to circulate in written form as an "epistle" to unidentifiable "Hebrews."

The other thirteen letters in the list all bear clearly the letter-form and the name of Paul as the writer. Yet as to three of these, most scholars are today agreed that both form and Pauline signature can be accepted as genuine only in a modified sense. The two letters to Timothy and the one to Titus are in reality manuals of pastoral counsel for young Church leaders, which merely assume as a literary form the guise of communications of Paul to two of his most faithful assistants. They differ sharply from Paul's own letters in style, vocabulary and religious interests, and at many points betray the organization and development of a generation later than his own. Their mutual likenesses are so close that they apparently have one writer, as they have one date, one attitude and one purpose. The author is a devoted Paulinist, who modestly sinks his own personality

and fame in his master's, and seems to use fragmentary passages from actual letters of Paul to give color and support to his own message. This extension and continuation of Paul's work has of course nothing discreditable in it. On the contrary, it was a recognized literary procedure of the time, which speaks only for the writer's self-effacement and devotion to the hero whose message he would do his modest best to reinforce for his own generation.

About two other letters bearing Paul's name there have been much discussion and difference of judgment. The one which in our Bibles is labelled "Ephesians" is erroneously so called, as the oldest manuscripts have no reference to Ephesus in the address, nor did the early Church so entitle it. It is a general letter written to churches not personally acquainted with the writer, who has merely heard of their faith, as they of his apostleship (1:15, 3:2). Ephesus, as we know, was Paul's best known church, where he remained at least three years, a period nearly twice as long as any other recorded stay. Many modern scholars, therefore, suppose this to be a "general" or "circular" letter sent by Paul to a whole series of churches in Asia Minor, purposely impersonal in tone. But there are distinct indications that it may be, not Paul's, but "Pauline." Its language is in large part a conscious repetition of that of Colossians, though used for a different purpose, and with a complete change of emotional tone. Read Colossians 3:16 to 4:1, then follow its repetition in Ephesians 5:18 to 6:9, noting how the same

words serve a new end. With all this reproduction of Paul's language in another letter, the style is completely unlike Paul. Note the long sentences; the first chapter (after the address of verses one and two) has only two, the second chapter has in reality but three, sentences, whose whole structure is hopelessly unlike Paul's well-known composition. We may call attention, too, to the writer's strong consciousness of "the Church," as a universal mystic fellowship of believers, whereas the living Paul was just founding the separate "churches," which only later grew into self-conscious unity. The Church is here disseminating a message revealed to God's "holy apostles;" indeed, it is "built upon the foundation of the apostles and the prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone" (2:20). Paul thinks of himself and his fellow apostles, not as part of the foundation, laid down to be built upon, but as builders erecting the temple upon that one foundation laid once for all, other than which he can conceive no man laying, namely Jesus Christ (I Cor. 2:11). Ephesians is the voice of the later day, looking back with veneration upon Paul and the other "holy apostles" and rightly seeing them, since now their work is done and they are laid to rest, as part of the foundation on which the great temple of the Christian faith is rising. Its writer is a devout Paulinist, with a real message for his day and real genius for expressing it. Yet his self-abnegation and his reverence for his great leader are so great that he deliberately makes a "Pauline" letter by liberal use of the phraseology,

particularly, of Colossians, rather than strike out an independent form of his own for the communication of his convictions. Whoever be the writer (and his name we can never know) he has given us one of the noblest products of the Christian genius in any time, a writing which from every point of view is one of the treasures of the canon.

With II Thessalonians the case is somewhat different. It has a similar reproduction of the language of another letter, that of I Thessalonians, but more mechanically, with less freshness and originality. Nothing is said in this letter which is not much better said in I Thessalonians, except the account of the Man of Sin and the program ushering in the end of the world, in the first twelve verses of chapter two. But this passage is precisely what we would be most willing not to have said at all; there is nothing like it in any other extant word of Paul, nor do his views elsewhere expressed seem to have room for it. It is more probable that a later Paulinist (not a genius this time), sharing these somewhat fantastic notions and believing that of course Paul must have shared them too, circulates them among the Christians of his time in the form of a letter which he tries to make as "Pauline" as possible by liberal imitation of an authentic model. In any case, even if II Thessalonians should be Paul's, it is his least inspired and least inspiring production. It adds nothing to his power or fame, but for any serious study of his mind creates only difficulties. Our common practice in seldom reading from it in public worship or in private devotions is sufficient

comment on its place in the scale of New Testament values.

The other eight letters ascribed to Paul seem, as a result of the most searching investigation of reverent scholars, to be really his. In the order in which they were probably written, we may name them as follows: I Thessalonians (written to the town now called Salonica in Turkey, where the Christian church Paul founded has lasted to this very day), Galatians (written to a group of churches in Asia Minor, of which one was probably at Angora, the new Turkish capital), I and II Corinthians (to the great metropolis of first century Greece, a rich and profligate city, long since in ruins), Colossians (Colosse is another Asia Minor town, now also a ruin), Philemon (a personal note to a prominent member of the church at Colosse), Philippians (Philippi, now ruined, was then the metropolis of Macedonia), Romans (written to announce Paul's hoped-for coming to Rome, where the church had been founded by others of whose identity we are forever ignorant). These eight really contain within themselves in all probability at least parts of three more letters. Second Corinthians is clearly not a unity as it stands. The passage 6:14 to 7:1, standing in sharp contrast to its context, is now widely held to be a part of a lost earlier letter of Paul to Corinth alluded to in I Cor. 5:9. Chapters ten to thirteen are full of bitter irony and reveal a most painful estrangement between Paul and the church, whereas chapters one to nine are an outpouring of grateful joy over a complete recon-

ciliation which has come about as the result of a sharp letter sent by Paul to recall the Corinthians to their better mind. It is scarcely open to doubt that the passionate rebukes of the last four chapters are from the sharp letter referred to; they cannot be fitted into the happy pages that tell so movingly of the reconciliation.

The note of recommendation for Phoebe, which now passes as the last chapter of Romans, cannot originally have been a part of that letter, which was sent to a church Paul had neither founded nor visited. This note contains a larger number of intimate personal greetings than all the rest of Paul's letters put together, and so far as we can locate the persons and the situations mentioned, they belong to Ephesus, where the apostle had most and closest personal associations. It seems, then, probable that there was really a brief letter to the Ephesian Church, even though the one now so labelled in our New Testament has received a mistaken address. This note was probably written about the same time as the great letter to Rome; in that case it is likely to be the last communication of the apostle's we possess. For, as the order given above suggests, the letter to Philippi, to Colosse and to Philemon were probably not written from the period of Paul's detention in Rome at the end of his life, as used to be supposed, but from an earlier imprisonment in Ephesus. In any case, the exact order or place of writing is not the matter of importance. The great thing is rather the highly-endowed and extraordinarily vital personality that still speaks to

us through these wonderful letters, as if the speaker were our contemporary, conveying to us by some strange magic his own spiritual vision and the supreme triumph of his faith.

One consequence of the circulation of Paul's letters in the churches was, as we saw, the production of "Pauline" letters, to which he loaned the inspiration of his spirit and the example of his composition and phraseology. Another, closely related, was the composition of very similar "letters," bearing the names of other departed and venerated apostles. In the nature of the case, these could not be sent to an individual congregation as if from the apostle in question, who was no longer among the living. Moreover, this was the time when men were growing conscious of "the Church," of which "Ephesians" speaks so nobly; to that Christian fellowship as a whole the new teachers would address themselves, or to a large section of it, rather than to single local societies. So came what were called "catholic" (i. e. "general") letters, contributed to the ever enlarging stream of edifying writings which circulated among the churches, meant for all Christians everywhere, or for all those of a given land or province. Such productions are "letter" only in form (a form chosen largely because of Paul's powerful example) and bear apostolic names as similarly part of that literary form. Such are "James" and "Jude" (i. e. Judas) and the two epistles bearing Peter's name. Later three anonymous communications were for the same reason given in common usage the name of John, and appear in our Bible as I, II

and III John. So Paul's name was often taken in vain to lend apostolic sanction to the anonymous "Hebrews"; so, probably, "Ephesians," II Thessalonians and the Pastorals, which are really general or "catholic" in character, were written in his name that he might continue to address the Church whose foundations he had so firmly laid. All these general letters belong to the generations after Paul and the first active period of the missions. They begin in the last years of the first century and continue to appear through most of the first half of the second, but before the year 150 everything now in our New Testament had been written and was at least beginning to have circulation.

The last decades of the first century, when the churches are beginning to feel themselves a Church, also begin to produce those written transcripts of the Gospel certain of which are the head and front of our New Testament. At first "the Gospel" is purely and simply an oral message. Its dissemination is best pictured in that vivid word, "What ye hear in the ear, that proclaim upon the housetops!" So it was proclaimed; no one thought of it as anything but a living voice, a personal contagion. It had first been given to the world without the aid of books, and by its very nature should continue so to be given. So it spread, spoken first by eye-and-ear-witnesses, then by their converts, who made converts who in turn passed it on to others whose converts did the same—an oral teaching passing through the medium of all these personalities, first heard, then

inwardly pondered, then spoken forth again, to go on its conquering way. Granting the perfect integrity and fidelity of all those who thus served as mediums of transmission, granting them powers of memory far superior to our own, we must yet recognize them as human, with the human liability to something less than perfect accuracy. The message, without any point of fixed control, is gradually getting farther and farther away from the original form of its proclamation. Moreover, missionaries are not too numerous, and new doors are everywhere opening. They must go on to fresh opportunities before the present congregation is fully instructed in the principles and practice of the Gospel; how useful it would be to leave behind the Gospel in writing, to be a guide to the group trying to walk the Christian way alone. New workers want a gospel compend to study; devotion wants it as a source of strength and faith.

In such perfectly obvious ways, the whole situation forces the oral gospel to precipitate itself in written form. Just when or where it first did so we do not know; the earliest gospel writing of which we have record was written probably in the sixties of the first century, approximately about the time of Paul's death. It is a work no longer extant; we know of it from references and quotations given by the early church fathers. Matthew, one of the twelve disciples, they say, wrote down the sayings of Jesus in the Aramaic language in which they were uttered, thus making a written transcript of "the Gospel" much as it had fallen from the lips of the Master himself. This docu-

ment, of course, must have been welcomed with enthusiasm as "filling a long-felt want"; it was, we know, widely used, both in its original form and in Greek versions which soon came to be made of it. For a time, in all probability, it held the field alone; no one else had yet ventured to put "the Gospel" into writing. Its rapid spread showed the esteem in which it was held; it was satisfying; it gave the Gospel as Jesus had himself taught it. Yet, the idea of the written Gospel once familiar, this initial attempt did not remain permanently satisfying. When Jesus spoke the Gospel, he spoke it out of his active life, out of his contacts with the people about him. Always his utterances were related to the circumstances under which he spoke, to the people to whom he spoke. After all, the bare sayings, without *him,* without his personality expressed in tone and look and gesture, without his accompanying actions, without the audience and the concrete situations to which they applied, without the background of scene and incident which gave much of their significance—after all, the bare sayings were not the whole Gospel. *He* was the Gospel, not merely the words he spoke. Had these same words been spoken by another, or by him read aloud in an empty room, they would not have been "Gospel" at all, at least, not at all the same Gospel. More and more was it being felt that the story of Jesus' mission, of his career of singular devotion and unselfish service, must be put into the written Gospel, as they were already in the oral Gospel. Indeed, from the beginning they had been in that,

recounted and preached about from the time of Jesus' death by every proclaimer of the new faith.

And so, to supplement and complement the Gospel of the Sayings was written the Gospel of the Doings, the simple, yet moving, narrative of Jesus' mission. By whom first? We do not know. But the first attempt of this sort of which we have record is the familiar "Gospel according to Mark," still in our New Testament. Of its origin early Christian writers tell us something. It seems that John Mark of Jerusalem, whom we meet in the Book of Acts as a companion of Paul and Barnabas at the beginning of their first missionary journey together, had later travelled with Peter on similar missions. Now Peter, a fisherman of Galilee, knew no language but his native Aramaic; when he got outside of Palestine, as he sooner or later did, among Greek speaking people, he could proclaim the Message only with the aid of an interpreter, who was fluent in both tongues. In this capacity Mark served him. Time passed, and Peter died, perhaps in Italy, though this is not certain. At any rate, Mark was said to be left in Italy, not himself an apostle or original preacher, but an excellent self-effacing medium for transmitting to wider audiences the utterances of other, more gifted men. All this material is in his mind; he has repeated it in Greek after Peter's Aramaic perhaps hundreds of times. He comes across a copy (probably in a Greek rendering) of Matthew's Gospel of the Sayings. He is profoundly impressed by the value of what it presents; but he is impressed also by what it fails

to present, its great omission of the narrative setting. All that had been in Peter's preaching; probably Peter was better at expounding the man and his deeds than his teachings. At any rate, Mark knows the story well, values it, believes it too should find written record. Who better equipped to write it than himself? He sets himself to the task. He does not attempt to do again what Matthew had done; he repeats but little of the teaching. The whole of what we call the "Sermon on the Mount," the central summary of the Gospel, with Beatitudes, Lord's Prayer, and the sublime counsels to universal love of man and universal trust in God—the whole of this is absent from Mark, not, of course, because he does not consider it a vital part of "the Gospel," but because it already stands written, in a record more authoritative than anything he could produce. Here and there, no doubt, he makes some use of Matthew's compendium; for the most part his tribute to its influence is shown in what he does not give. He wrote in Greek, the world-language, for the churches everywhere. His simple style shows frequent Latin words and constructions; when he wrote he had probably been living for some time in Rome. The great merit of his work is its absolute transparency; Mark is like a pane of glass, that lets everything behind it be clearly seen without obtruding itself on the field of vision. Mark makes no comments of his own, does not indicate his own position or judgment at any point. He simply lets us see Jesus moving and acting and making his own impression on us. Mark

uses no adjectives either of praise of Jesus or of blame of his enemies. He does not tell us what we ought to think. That the reader is so powerfully impressed by Jesus is not due to Mark's art, but to his artlessness. He stands entirely out of the way. This is his highest praise. We may be devoutly grateful that he was not an original genius, an independent preacher, a reflective thinker. In such a case he would have given us his own interpretation of the scenes he describes; as it is, he is content to describe them. We are left with a somewhat colorless picture of Mark, but Jesus stands out all the more clear and convincing.

The churches now have two quite different expressions of the Gospel in writing, the Gospel of Jesus speaking, the Gospel of Jesus living. Of the two the first continues to be most highly esteemed. It was perhaps longer, it was by an apostle, one of the Twelve who had seen and heard, and it gave the Message itself as spoken by the Master. But the story-gospel of Mark was valued too, and more as the years went by. To have a complete record of the gospel it was necessary to use both books, reading now from one, now from the other. One could read a bit of the Markan story and fit into it, at what seemed the proper point, a section of the Sayings. Both Sayings and narrative were given new vividness and power by being thus related. Each needed the other to be fully appreciated. But it is not easy to use two books in this way; before long it occurs to more than one reader that the really intelligent thing is to edit the two sources into one contin-

uous gospel-record, which will have the material and the excellencies of both, without this disadvantage of having them separated. No sooner was this said than it was done, by more than one intelligent Christian.

One man whom we know to have made this compilation of a complete Gospel out of two incomplete ones was one who had come into Christianity, as all the first believers did, from Judaism. As a former Jew, he was keenly alive to all the close connections between the two faiths, which seemed to him like mother and daughter. He was sure that Christianity was the divinely intended outcome of Judaism, that the Old Testament had hinted this in a hundred previously misinterpreted passages, and he was particularly anxious so to present the Gospel of Jesus that his fellow-countrymen would be persuaded of its truth and its claim on their own allegiance. With these interests, he produced what we call today "the Gospel according to Matthew," the first book in our New Testament. His name we are never told; for him and his readers it was unimportant. The Gospel is all, and of *that* he was not so presumptuous as to think himself the author! For him, the chief documentary source is that record of the Sayings by Matthew; when he combines it with Mark's story and with such other gospel material as has come to his knowledge the resultant work is still the Gospel going back to the apostolic record by Matthew, however completed by addition of further material. So in time his work (since his name, if known, was not remembered)

came to be known in the churches as the Gospel *according to* (not by) Matthew. This form of title says nothing at all as to authorship, but only names the apostolic sponsor supposed to stand behind the particular version. The work of this evangelist deserves all praise. Not only does he do his work of editing most skilfully but he shapes the material into the most universal form, so that it serves the need of all races and all times. His Gospel is the one of the widest appeal, combining the most varied interests, registering at once the most primitive elements and the most recent doctrinal developments of his own day, passionately true to the Jewish roots of the faith, yet thoroughly emancipated and world-wide in its vision of the Gospel's future. He alone of the evangelists speaks of "the Church": of all most Catholic, it is no accident that his work stands forever first among the Gospels, at the very head of our canon.

Of very different background and interests was another man who not much, if any, later, undertook precisely the same editorial task. This man was a Gentile by birth and upbringing. He was at home in the great world of Greek life and thought, though in just what part of it we cannot be sure. To him the connection of his religion with Judaism was not of special importance; he was writing to commend it to Gentiles like himself. He too had Matthew's version of the Sayings and Mark's story of the Mission; he too desired to make of the two, with what other material could serve his purpose, a more perfect and complete Gospel for the Gentile churches. For him

the great temple of the new faith was rising in the world on a foundation whose chief cornerstone was Jesus and his work, but to which belonged also the mission of prophets and apostles like Paul and his fellow-workers. He, therefore, did not stop with making one volume, telling of all that Jesus began to do and to teach, but continued the story with an account of the acts of the apostles (chiefly of Peter and of Paul) which laid the Church's foundations ever more deep and strong. In this second volume also he depended on written records by predecessors, for, as he says in his preface to the Gospel volume, already "many had taken in hand to draw up a narrative concerning these matters" (Luke 1:1). Just as for volume one he could use the precious record of Jesus' words by one who had heard them, so for volume two he had available at least a partial account of Paul's activities by one who had shared in many of them. As every reader of Acts notices, long passages occur written in the first person plural, where the pronoun "we" occurs repeatedly in a narrative in the highest degree fresh and life-like. The name of this companion of Paul who says "we" is never given, but the earliest Church believed him to have been Luke, a medical friend of the apostle (Col. 4:14), and we have today no more probable name to suggest. It was natural for early readers of the completed book to suppose that the writer of the "we passages" was the writer of the whole and so to attach the name of Luke to the Book of Acts, whence it naturally passed to the Gospel which preceded Acts as a first volume. There

is, however, much reason to think that the we-passages (the supposed work of Luke) are merely embodied by the author of the whole, whose name remains unknown. But on this point scholars are divided. In either case, it is clear why this Gentile gospel came to be included in the canon under the label "according to Luke." The physician Luke was not one of the Twelve disciples, not an apostle, had quite certainly never seen or heard Jesus. But he had companied with Paul, and the connection of his name with the Acts was enough to carry it over to the accompanying Gospel. His Gospel shows itself, as we read, to be the work of a man intensely concerned with the spread of the faith among his fellow Gentiles, among the poor as well, among the despised and disesteemed of earth. All the "social" applications of religion are here most strongly stressed; here the contrast of rich and poor stands out most sharply. He saw the Gospel making its way against the dead weight of wealth and pride and social privilege and all sorts of vain aristocracies, and to its measure of victory over them he made a great contribution. In his pages alone are some of the finest expressions the Gospel ever found; if he had done no more than add to our permanent record the immortal parables of the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan he would have made the whole Christian world forever his debtor.

Other attempts to put the Gospel into writing there were in plenty in these years; all save these three have long ago perished, surviving at most in a vague reference or in fragmentary quotation.

Only one other written form of the Gospel was to be used widely enough and long enough to be included in the canon, and that is a work of a very different sort. No one has expressed this difference better than Clement, the learned head of the Christian school at Alexandria about the year 200. Matthew, Mark and Luke, he says, wrote the Gospel's body; afterwards John wrote a spirit-Gospel. This contrast between body and spirit was a common and obvious figure to express the difference between the facts and the significance of the facts. What happened is body: the spiritual interpretation of what happened is spirit. The spirit of a historical tradition may find expression in many ways; in ancient times it often found expression in the literary form of vision and allegory. The fourth and last of our Gospels, written with a knowledge of the others, by a man more of a genius and more of a thinker than any of his predecessors, is a great spiritual interpretation of what the Gospel of Jesus meant for the thoughtful world of the early second century. As a record of fact it has very little in common with the other three, which agree in telling what is clearly the same story. Its narrative can be understood only when we realize that its gifted author was not attempting to do again what they had done, but to set forth under the guise of narrative the great ideas which were coming to be understood as the authentic purport of the Christian message. Here is a true expression of the Gospel, written by a genius of rare insight and graphic power. Here the Christ appears as the

Person he was for the eye of faith; here he becomes the spokesman of the lofty assertions of the Church's faith; here his truth wrestles with all the foes which history could bring against it. The effort of traditional piety to make of all this a record of fact has only obscured its magnificent revelation of truth. The seven-fold "I Am" of the Gospel is the ever-repeated "He is" of the Church's conviction, as the seven "signs" signify the manifold workings of Christianity in the needy human soul. Everywhere we have transparent and powerful symbol, everywhere the heavenly visitant shines through the veil of mortal clay, and the eternal word of God is heard speaking as never man spake. These things are written that men might believe that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God and, believing, might have life in his name.

All the evidence points to western Asia Minor as the place of origin of this masterpiece, and to the first twenty years of the second century as its date. Concerning its authorship it gives us nowhere so much as a hint; it is not even clear whether it was written by a Gentile or by a Jew. The present twenty-first chapter seems not to have been from the first a part of the text; it is clearly a supplement. In it some anonymous persons, writing as "we," suggest that the "beloved disciple" was the witness for the material of "these things" and, indeed, "wrote these things." This "beloved disciple," who appears in the pages of this Gospel, (first at the last supper), and never anywhere else, is also by no word or hint identified.

Late second-century speculation, for reasons now only partly conjecturable, decided that John, the son of Zebedee, was meant, and about his name, as the reputed evangelist, an imposing structure of legend developed. Traditionally the work therefore came to be known as the "Gospel according to John," though scholars, for whom the certain anonymity of the original commands more respect than precarious speculation, commonly speak of it simply as the Fourth Gospel. Its problems are far from being solved, but all study of it leaves more and more profound the sense of its genius and power.

Unlike the naturally anonymous procedure of the evangelists, the writer of the Revelation, which closes our New Testament, repeatedly gives his name. He is called John, a name common among Jews and those who, like the Christians, were influenced by Jewish traditions. His work reveals him certainly a born Jew, thinking in his native Semitic speech, which his pen turns into a popular, often barbarous, Greek. He is steeped in the Old Testament, particularly in the book of Daniel and all those writings which were thought to picture the great drama of man's destiny, the "end of the world" and its replacement by a new diviner order of life. Alongside the canonical writings of this sort, there was a large and growing literature of works called "Apocalypses" or Revelations, to the number of which our John adds one more. Drawing freely, as did all apocalyptic writers, from the stores of imagery collected and transmitted by his predecessors, he welds together

heterogeneous material into one of the most magnificent books the world has ever seen. Cruel wrong has been done to his art and to his artlessness by the "interpretations" into which successive generations of dogmatic Christianity have forced his revelation as into a strait-jacket. What John saw clearly, with the eye of faith, through the murky clouds of persecution that were gathering ever thicker about the infant Church, was the sure and certain triumph of the will of God over a merciless and unclean world-order. If we remain preoccupied with the details of his pictures, fascinating as they often are, or if we find the essence of his conviction in the intense foreshortening of his historical perspective, so that for him all these things were to come quickly, we shall miss what he agonized to convey. To his first readers, to whom was fast approaching the choice between the worship of the Beast and following in the bleeding track of the Lamb that was slain, it was a great thing to be shown the supernal vision of those who had come through the great tribulation, whom one who also had greatly suffered guided unto fountains of waters of life, from whose eyes God would wipe every tear. The tyrannies and brutalities of a hostile government could be endured, for the Kingdoms of this world were on the point of becoming the Kingdom of our God, and he should reign forever and ever. There is much blackness and blood and fire in the Apocalypse, as there is in human history; there is the clash and din of warfare. But through it all, high, clear, insistent until in the end it alone commands

the ear, sounds the Hallelujah Chorus, which out of no other book ever written breaks in such strength and exultation.

The Revelation is a document composed for its own time; we can date it with more exactness and confidence than perhaps any other New Testament writing. It appeared (the external evidence of church fathers and the internal evidence of its own text here agree) about the year ninety-five, in or near Ephesus. To the Asia Minor Christians, hard beset, it sounded its message of courage and cheer with the authority of an authentic spiritual power. It has never ceased to speak to men and nations with that same commanding voice, and has mightily served the centuries. Obscure enough, the key of time and place and circumstance once lacking, no book ever written has been more arbitrarily perverted to alien uses; no book has ever broken through its own obscurities and its perversions with more indisputable assertion of its primal meaning. The very splendor of its glowing diction, the very intensity of its moral and spiritual passion, the very sublimity of its conviction of triumph, these assure immortality to the Revelation of this Asian John. Who is he? A brother of the threatened believers, a sharer in their tribulation, as in the Kingdom that lay beyond and in the patience by which the interval must be bridged; more definitely than this, his account of himself, we cannot describe or identify him. One of the disciples of Jesus he can scarcely be; never is there the suggestion of the reminiscence of one who saw or heard. Still less can he be the au-

thor (to whom tradition later gave also the name John) of that almost antipodal writing the Fourth Gospel. But we know the thing about him most worth our knowing, the service he has rendered us, and we are grateful, not only to him, but to the churches whose attachment to his pages kept them widely read and continuously reproduced until they took their rightful place among the canonical writings. Standing with singular felicity at the canon's end, they sound forever the magnificent closing note of our New Testament and our Bible. Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth!

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Interpreting *the* Church *to the* World

By Rev. Christopher R. Eliot, LL.D.

[Bulfinch Place Church
October 21, 1928]

[No. 310]

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Live Wires

Interpreting the Church to the World

By REV. CHRISTOPHER R. ELIOT, LL.D.

"Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans?
And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" Acts 2; 7, 8.

IN a recent number of "The League of Nations News" I read about a new device used by its Labor Conference, to enable each delegate to understand and follow the proceedings. As the delegates represent different nations, perhaps fifteen or twenty, possibly more, and in many instances understand only their own languages, it has been necessary to translate or interpret the addresses for their benefit, a process causing much delay and confusion. A new device to overcome this difficulty has been now adopted, the idea being credited to our fellow-citizen, Mr. E. A. Filene, and the practical application of it to our fellow-countryman, Thomas Edison.

This is the way it works. The delegates take their places at their desks in front of the speaker. There are just as many electric buttons on each desk as there are languages represented in the delegate body. When the speaker begins, each listener touches the button which represents the language he understands, and he then adjusts a headphone to his ears and listens; and he hears the address in that language. No matter what tongue the speaker employs, French, English, Russian, German, or any other, what he says reaches the listener in

that one language he understands. There is no delay, no confusion. Conceivably at least, the address, spoken in Dutch or Arabic, is translated into twenty other languages, and finds its way immediately into twenty different minds.

It makes one think of the day of Pentecost, does it not?—when people from different countries, Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and dwellers in Mesopotamia, in Judea, Egypt, Rome, were listening to the apostles (who were filled with the Holy Spirit) and heard them speaking in their own tongues: "Behold," they exclaimed in amazement, "Are not all these that speak Galileans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?"

That was the day of Pentecost (however we may explain the story, whether as a miracle, or as an allegory, or by some other rationalizing explanation), a story befitting the first century: and now we have another story, this time from Geneva, as miraculous as the other, had we no scientific explanation, a story befitting the twentieth century—a story which of course has its scientific and very simple explanation, as follows:

The speaker is talking into a microphone, or telephone, of course, and there are men in the adjoining room who, as they listen, translate what he is saying into the required languages, and send each translation over its own wire, to the appropriate delegate at his desk in front of the speaker. It is as simple and easy as A B C, if you have the apparatus, and the men quick enough, and skillful enough, to do the work. If you were standing in that Committee Room, you would hear nothing, I suppose, but the speaker's voice—but each delegate would hear the voice of his translator; and yet the message would be that of the speaker. Were such a thing to happen for the first time without warning, those twenty delegates might rise in their amazement and cry out as did the multitude on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem: "Are not these speakers all Rus-

sians, Italians, Scandinavians? How then hear we every man in our own language, wherein we were born?"

Peter's explanation to the astonished people was "It is the Holy Spirit"; we say, to explain the Geneva story, "Electricity." But in both cases, the message proceeds from its source to those waiting to receive it, and through them to a world waiting to receive it, and to which it may mean salvation.

But why am I telling you this story about a League of Nations device? Not merely because of its interest from a scientific or practical point of view. I am telling it because I find in that story the suggestion of another story, actual or possible, in which you and I and all church people may have a part.

Let me tell you what I see. I see a large auditorium, somewhat like this where we are today. At one end is a platform, a desk or a pulpit, and the floor is occupied by pews, as here. People come and sit in them once a week, and some one stands in the pulpit, reading, speaking, leading a service of worship. The place is called a church and the people a congregation, and the leader, the minister. Every Sunday the minister brings his message and proclaims it in his own way, and in his own language. Everyone present receives it according to his power of attention and ability to understand. No one gets precisely the same as any other, because he himself is different from every other, and brings with him a different experience and training. But in spite of that there is something all do receive and can appreciate and make their own, namely, the spirit and the essential purpose of it all. In some way, almost mysterious, the message, the singing, the prayer, are translated for each and every one according to his need. There is a universal language in music, in prayer, in personality, which, quite apart from ideas or arguments, the heart understands, interpreting them all according to its need. The secret is not so much in what the preacher says as in what he is in himself.

The magic of it, the meaning and the power, is not in what he gives; not altogether in what he is; but in what *we are ourselves*—as each of us translates the message to serve his own need, as each interprets the Spirit of the hour into aspirations and purposes of his own.

Very quaint are some of the sayings of the poet, George Herbert, about preaching and praying. Perhaps you remember some of them:

> "In time of service seal up both thine eyes, and send them to thy heart."
>
> "Praying's the end of preaching."
>
> "Let vain or busy thoughts have there no part. Bring not thy plough, thy plots, thy pleasure thither. Christ purged his temple; so must thou thy heart."
>
> "Judge not the preacher: the worst speak something good; if all want sense; God takes a text, and preacheth patience."
>
> "He that gets patience, and the blessing which Preachers conclude with, hath not lost his pains. He that by being at the church escapes the ditch which he might fall in by companions, gains. He that loves God's abode, and to combine with saints on earth, shall one day with them shine."
>
> "Though private prayer be a brave design, yet public hath more promises, more love; and love's a weight to hearts, to eyes a sign. We all are but cold suitors; let us move where it is warmest. Leave thy six or seven; pray with the most; for where most pray is Heaven."

But my vision includes much more than this and something more important.

Listen—From every church I see many outgoing paths, leading from the pews into the world. They are those over which we go when the service has ended, to our homes. Nor

do the paths stop there. We shall take them the next day to our work, or to our neighbors, or to follow some one of the myriad ways of experience, discovery, adventure.

Of course these ways are different, each from every other: because our homes and friends are not alike, and because our neighborhoods and working conditions, and everything about us, are different. Each of us then will take his own peculiar path, to his own home and neighborhood. The picture I see is this, the church here, and the homes over there, and the people, on their way from one to the other.

In our Sunday School room, we have a picture showing the Pilgrims on their way to church. I think it would be a picture even more significant if we could follow the Pilgrims back to their homes.

My thought is this, suggested by that story of the League of Nations, that we ourselves must be the "live wires" by which the message of the church, its faith and life, will be carried to the outside world, and that we must translate it into the language other people can understand, so that it may meet their needs.

There are three ways by which this can be accomplished: (1) By the things we say; (2) By the way we live; (3) By the Spirit we cherish in our hearts.

1. By the first I mean the expression of our faith and loyalty in proper ways at appropriate times. This is not always easy, and it is said that Unitarians especially are slow and shy when it comes to talking about religion, and particularly shy of urging others, even if without church connections, to become attendants or members at theirs.

We sometimes attribute this to our respect for other people's religious opinions and beliefs, or to our reluctance to interfere or proselyte; but it is oftener due, I fear, to indifference, or to our failure to appreciate the principles and the faith we profess to hold.

Can it be that seeing the good other denominations are doing, we do not feel ourselves justified in disturbing them?

Can it be that we distrust the saving power of our own faith?

Can it be that we consider our faith so nearly, in spirit, the same as that of other churches that we think it unnecessary, or unimportant, to do anything about it?

Whatever the reason, it is true that we are not so ready or eager as we ought to be to spread the truth as we understand it, or to offer to others our way of faith and life.

My thought isn't that we should try to unsettle others or to draw them away from the churches of their choice; but it is that the world is full of people without any religious faith at all, and without any church home, to whom our way might be an inspiration and a blessing: and it is that we have a message of faith and a way of life which, if accepted by ourselves and others, would transform this world into a kingdom of righteousness, goodwill and joy.

Perhaps you have heard or read something about a new Church Campaign which has been carried on successfully in a number of cities. It is something very different from the old-fashioned Revivals. There were no professional or highly paid Evangelists; no sensational Revival Meetings;—indeed, no public meetings at all; only those of committees and the usual church services. It was a campaign conducted by each church, or local group of churches, in its own way. It was preceded, in some localities, by a survey, to determine church preferences, and to list all not connected with any denomination. Each church was to study its own problem, its own membership and possibilities. Then visiting began.

It is a layman's campaign, including women of course. It is a Visitation Campaign, not a Preaching Campaign. It endeavors to carry to every family, or individual, not already

actively connected with a church, a hearty invitation to definitely connect itself with some church.

It endeavors, by such visiting, to interpret the church and its message of faith and opportunity to people outside and to bring them into the church home. Each church is to be its own Evangelist. Thus the proper expression of its faith and its office would be made, and its members would become the living interpreters thereof.

Something like this might be going on all the year, if we were "Live Wires."

2. The second way to carry our religion out into the world and interpret it to the people there is to live the kind of life our faith demands;—and the third way is to breathe into it the Christian Spirit.

One of the things that shocks and scandalizes the world outside the churches is to find men professing Christianity and not living it. Isn't this a question we should ask ourselves as members of this church, or any church? What about Monday and Tuesday; and what about business and pleasure; and what about life at home; our daily lives as neighbors, citizens, friends? When I take one of those paths leading out from the church into the world, and become again a member of my family, and of my little community, what sort of an impression am I making, and what kind of an argument am I giving, as to the value of the church, and of religion itself? What about my patience, my self control, my courage, my fidelity? What are people saying? Hypocrite? Professing one thing, acting another? No matter what people say. Am I honest and true and strong for the very things my faith, my church, demands?

Do you remember what St. Paul said to the people in the little church in Corinth? "Ye are our Epistle—the Epistle of Christ—written not with ink but with the spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone but in fleshy tables of the heart."

Each member of that little congregation was to be a letter of recommendation for the new religion; the best possible argument, that is; the only proof of its value, its validity, its beauty. Each member, including Paul himself, was to be a minister of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit.

You recall the words of Jesus as recorded in the fourth Gospel about discipleship. The test was not to sign a creed; it wasn't to be conformity, or subscription to a document. It was the kind of life.

> "Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command."
>
> "By this shall they know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."
>
> "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."

St. Paul spoke of the new truth, the new religion, as "a living way"; yes, it was the way "people call heresy"; but it was the more "excellent way." His followers were to walk in that way, and to live that kind of life; the way of truth, the life of unselfish love.

What then, if we say we believe and do nothing about it? What then, if we talk about brotherhood, and have not the spirit of brotherhood? What service are we rendering to men or to God, to the church or the Kingdom, if we betray the Master by misrepresenting his cause? Would it not be as though one of those trusted men in the secret chamber of the Geneva League of Nations Palace, translating, interpreting, should play the speaker false, and send over the wires not what the speaker said, but the very opposite?

The only thing I want you to remember is this—that we are to be the messengers of the church, going forth to translate its message of faith and hope and love into words the world outside can understand; our world of neighbors, companions, friends; yes, even our families.

First of all, we must interpret that message to ourselves. It isn't merely the word of the minister, or the Bible, or the prayer that counts, but what we make out of it by our own thought and devotion. We must listen, ourselves; we must ourselves worship; we ourselves must breathe in the Spirit divine.

Then shall we go, each of us, his way, to his own home, to his neighbors, friends and fellow-workers, to tell them the story:—not always in words, but sometimes; always in terms of life; and best of all by that Spirit which none of us understands, but all of us feel when in the presence of heroic or saintly souls.

It will matter little then to what nation, race or church we belong, or what language we speak. We shall be understood; and we shall understand. It will be no miracle; but something deeper than thought, more mysterious than electricity. Shall we not say, "It is the Holy Spirit; the Love Divine; the Infinite Life; in which we live and move and have our being?"

THE American Unitarian Association is the working missionary organization of the Unitarian churches of America, and is supported by the voluntary contributions of churches and individuals. It seeks to promote sympathy and united action among Liberal Christians, and to spread the principles which are believed by Unitarians to be essential to civil and religious liberty and progress and to the attainments of the spiritual life. To this end it supports missionaries, establishes and maintains churches, holds conventions, aids in building meeting-houses, publishes, sells and gives away books, sermons, tracts, hymn-books and devotional works.

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MAKING THE GRADE

By Rev. Minot Simons, D. D.

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"The object of the American Unitarian Association shall be to diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure Christianity; and all Unitarian Christians shall be invited to unite and co-operate with it for that purpose."

(*The General Conference of Unitarian and Other Christian Churches, passed the following vote at Saratoga, N. Y., in* 1894.)

"These Churches accept the religion of Jesus holding, in accordance with his teaching, that practical religion is summed up in love to God and love to man."

"The Conference recognizes the fact that its constituency is Congregational in tradition and polity. Therefore, it declares that nothing in this Constitution is to be construed as an authoritative test; and we cordially invite to our working fellowship any who, while differing from us in belief, are in general sympathy with spirit and our practical aims."

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Making the Grade

THERE is only one way to climb a hill—do it one step at a time. There is only one way to climb a mount of perplexities or trials, and that is to make the grade day by day. This, in a word, is the great simple truth which we ought to keep in mind whenever we have prolonged difficulties to surmount.

Here is a matter far removed from great public interests and questions, far removed from the popular topics in the science and philosophy of the present time. It is a simple matter of immediate concern to each of us, a simple matter because we all know all there is to be known about it. Yet we forget. We fail sometimes to live up to what we know. We allow ourselves to be misled, to carry unnecessary burdens, to miss heedlessly the best things of life every day. I cannot tell you anything new about this matter but I can remind you and myself how we can avoid some losses and handicaps and thus assure our greater success and happiness. It is an ancient saying that only fools make the same mistake twice. Alas, there is not much to that, or else, indeed, there is everything to it, because most of us have made the same mistake twice. Sometimes the mistakes are relatively unimportant but if they become habits, particularly habits of life, they put a blight upon our careers.

Sometimes a great truth is appreciated in its largest aspects. We like to think of life as an opportunity for progress, but we are likely to estimate progress simply in terms of process, and not also in terms of attainment. We express our faith "in the progress of mankind on-

ward and upward forever." What do we mean by it? Usually we think of it as simply going on, to something that lies ahead but is never reached because we are forever going on. We have an idea that there is a glory in moving from here to there. We call the movement progress. But not all movement is progress.

True progress involves attainment and a certain measure of final attainment. Each step does not find its significance simply in the fact that it leads to another step beyond, but rather in the fact that in a very real sense it is an end in itself. Life means nothing to any of us if we are merely urging ourselves on to something or to somewhere. Life is now. Today not only looks toward tomorrow but it is an end in itself. "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." We must get somewhere today. That is the encouraging significance of each day, when we have ahead of us a climb we know not of what length.

There are many times in life when success or failure depends upon whether or not we can keep going. It is uphill going and after a time the grade begins to tell. We wonder if our strength, our resources, are going to hold out. Can we hold on and keep climbing? Can we make the grade? Perhaps we can see the top and perhaps we can but have faith that it is there. We take to ourselves all the helps that we can find. We draw upon our reserves, we practice all the strength-giving formulas, we resort to all the strength-giving devices. We try to keep up hope, we talk encouragingly to ourselves—anything to keep going.

It is helpful to remember that, in holding on for a long climb, the up-grade has only to be made each day, and that each day is the immediate concern. I remember a story of a Scotchman who had great difficulty in ridding himself of the liquor habit. It had almost destroyed him.

Finally he took the pledge. One day the minister met him, and said, "Sandy, do you keep the pledge?" "I do," said Sandy, "I keep praying 'O Lord, keep Sandy one more hour.'" Sandy was making the grade hour by the hour. Sometimes that may be necessary when the trial is particularly severe. My philosophy for the prolonged trial is,—hold on for the day, keep going for the day, and the grade is made.

We live by the day or we do not live, we merely exist. If we do not make each day count it will not count of itself. Every day must be given its significance or it has very little meaning. Think of the days we have had and think of how many of them have entirely faded from our memory. Most of them, as mere divisions of time, have become blurred and blended. From the point of view of our busy life today, we look back and wonder what we could have done with ourselves in other days. Yet those days, too, were probably crowded with experience. But the experiences and the days meant little to us unless at the time their results entered constructively into our lives, into what we were doing, or into the making of character. Then they signified definite steps, even though their memory has perhaps faded. Unless they meant definite steps, they mean nothing in our growth and progress. As a mere doing of something, as a mere existence, as a mere anticipation of today, they have faded away without meaning.

So with the years of a good many people who have simply drifted along and are getting nowhere. A recent writer has expressed the popular thought of life and of progress: "A man's work is never finally done because his life is always expanding and the time will never come when this law of progression will cease to operate. There can be no Heaven which is not a Heaven of development." Perfectly true, but there can be no

Heaven which does not continually issue into some definite attainment. Life is spaced off into days to allow us to live continually in a present, to attend to its needs, its duties, its opportunities, and to get somewhere in them. With our false ideas of progress the present seems small and narrow. Perhaps we look ahead at great spaces somewhere beyond, but the fact is, unless we turn a furrow here, no ploughing will be done.

Greet the new day, then, with the invigorating sentiment of the old psalmist, "This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it." "But how can I," some one will say, "How can I rejoice today when it is so burdened and when my only consolation is in the past and my only hope in the future?" Here we come to the importance of our moods, our attitudes of mind. Whenever we have a steady climb before us these things tell.

Of course, I have no idle expectation that in trying circumstances we shall ever cut ourselves off from the memories of the past or from anticipations of the future. These memories, however, may both help and hurt. These anticipations may both help and hurt. The supreme consideration is that we are living now. It is all the time that actually is. Said Marcus Aurelius, "Throwing away then all things, hold to these only which are few; and besides, bear in mind that every man lives only this present time, which is an indivisible point, and that all the rest of his life is either past or it is uncertain." We have lived the past for better or for worse. The future is not. Our life is now and it is always most needful and effective to focus our best thought and our best heart upon the life which now is, the step which now must be taken, the work which now must be done. The past is now to be fulfilled or redeemed, the future is now to be assured. To the extent which we live now

we shall live then. Now is the accepted time for bringing something to pass.

From this point of view I am ready to look with you into the past. What have we brought out of it? In ancient times an Oriental army was laden with a vast amount of unnecessary baggage. A modern army carries only an absolutely necessary equipment in order that it may act swiftly and effectively. There are a good many people laden with all their mistakes and failures and regrets, cherishing them as though they were a good thing to keep and dwell upon. As a matter of fact, they should be cast away if people are to move on effectively day by day. Only the fruit of experience should be kept.

It is a sad thing to see a man so dwell upon a past failure as to lose all ambition in the present, and it is always possible that a direct appeal will recall him to himself and to all the possibilities of the present. In some way I would try to make it clear to him that the failure of yesterday has come and gone. In the light of what we know today I would say, "Yesterday you would indeed have done differently if you had had the light of today, but yesterday you did not have the light of today. Today you have the light from yesterday. Get the lesson out of yesterday and go ahead today in the light of it. Why crush your spirit today with regret? Live down the past in the good of the present. Today there may be, because of yesterday, strength, wisdom, and grace of character. And while none of us can forget his sins or mistakes, he should not be so overwhelmed by the regret of them as to be robbed of all inspirations for today. Otherwise all moral progress would be impossible."

On the other hand, there is a joy in the memories of yesterday. Many a burdened soul wanders at times down the long avenues of the past and finds relief and

refuge from the burdens and perplexities of the present. Blessed is this power of memory! A mystery of mysteries, in which we may find comfort and peace in the remembered sunshine of old days. And if we idealize those days, as we invariably do, and give them a halo, which may not really belong to them, what matter?

The great matter is that we have lived those days, we have had their sweetness and light, but it is today that we are *living*. Are we using aright those days of the past when we so dwell upon them as to lose all heart for today? Surely not. If they have been dear to us they are surely still dearer if they become wellsprings of refreshment for today, if they encourage us to better and better living for today, with greater sympathy and deeper understanding; yes, with even a gladder living, gladder in the present consciousness that life has had such blessings and now is wiser and richer, more broad-minded and sympathetic because of them. So, then, from these remembered fields and remembered skies we ought to wander back even to a shut-in and burdened present and rejoice in the day that is, rejoice that we are alive and with something more like a song than a wail in our hearts.

Again from the same point of view, that now is the accepted time for living, I am ready to look with you into the future. But let us do it, in the first place, with our eyes open to the deception which we often play upon ourselves. How common it is for us all to expect more time next week or next month in which we shall be able to do many things that today get by us undone or half done. Let us repeat to ourselves something we all know all too well—that such a time will never come. Whatever we do must ever be done during a life-long lack of time. We have all the time there is. But all the time there is, is this passing instant which must be used

for better or for worse. We live in an eternal now, and if it is used rightly, that is the end of it. We can expect nothing more and hope for nothing more. If we do not use it rightly, that is probably the end of it also. There is no magic in next week or in next year. When we reach it, it will be a commonplace today. And the chances are that what has been left undone will remain undone because that day will likewise be crowded with the things of the moment.

Of course, from a burdened present we look into a more hopeful future just as we look back into a kinder past. One may feel that his trial, his present burden, will soon be over; why shall he not think of that freer future and thus be rid for a time from a burdened present? Why not, indeed, if it is an encouragement and a comfort? Anticipation is one of our chiefest pleasures. Hope is a power to strengthen the heart and to nerve the arm. The future may indeed be an inspiration for today provided we waste not the day in dreaming of the future or in dreading the future.

An all but fatal mistake is made by a good many people who are always going to do big things. Looking ahead they always see things in the large. In the future there appear to be grand possibilities. In the future great things are to be done. In the light of them the present seems pretty small, so small, indeed, that nothing is done. It is always going to be done. Such people never make the grade because they are always dreaming of making it.

Sometimes the day is wasted in anxiety and dread. Dread of the future is so much poison in the present. One may indeed say, "How can I rejoice in today when there is already falling upon it the shadow of a trial in tomorrow?" Truly in such a case one may not be glad in the sense of pleasure, yet one may be glad that it is

today and not to-morrow. That day of trial has not yet come, and today may be so lived that tomorrow the trial may never come or be less of a burden if it does come. Today may be so used that one may be stronger in all the higher powers of life with which to meet tomorrow when it comes. Real piety is trusting to the moral order of the universe. We die twice in dreading death; we suffer twice in expecting pain. Today is the day for living, and living so well that pain shall not shatter if it comes and death shall not dismay when it is at hand.

So from looking backward into the past and forward into the future, let us find ourselves again in this day which the Lord has made. So much depends upon our attitude toward it and upon the mood in which we live it. We have had many days, but each one is ever new and full of promise. If yesterday left us hurt let us not cherish the hurt. Let the veil of silence be drawn over the resentments of yesterday and the shade of a quiet trust over the tumults of the past. And then, why scan the way which may be rough and steep tomorrow? By over-anxiety we may hurt the very future for whose cause we are anxious today. In other words, it is better to focus attention upon the day which now is. Jesus must have had some such thought in mind when he said, "Take no thought for the morrow. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." And we might add, sufficient unto the day are the joys and opportunities thereof. Let us plan for tomorrow only to the extent that such plans are today's real business.

Every day, I repeat, should begin with such an appreciation as the old psalmist uttered in our text, "This is the day that the Lord hath made. I will rejoice and be glad in it." Or as a modern psalmist has said it—"Greet the new day with a cheer." Today's duty is all the duty

there is. Let me be of use today, and tomorrow is already prepared for. Today's work is the great work to be done. There are always people who would like to be doing something else. They feel that they ought to be doing something else. Circumstances have not been kind to them and they may be in a subordinate place when they feel that they are fitted for something better. Aside from the question of responsibility, the one question of importance is, "What is the best thing to do—to make a bad matter worse or to make it better?" Certainly a bad matter is made worse when a person half does the thing that he has to do. Today's work is his to do, whatever it is. Folded hands make a bad matter worse. Bitter and sullen rebellion makes a bad matter worse. The way to get on is, in the first place, to live today for all there is in it and do the work of today in the best possible way. One may then get promoted or one may not. A man may work into something he likes better or he may not, but today has been well done and, for all he knows, it may be a better day than a day anywhere else could possibly be. We must live our life now and do the work thereof now and compel a bad matter to be something better. Again and again has it happened, as Browning declared, "Sudden the worse turns the best to the brave." When fortunes are very low the tide may turn. If today is a brave and efficient day, it may turn now.

The only burdens which we have to bear are today's burdens, the ones which belong to the present and not to the future. Most of us probably suffer more from our anxieties than we do from our actual trials. Most of our anxieties turn out to be needless. How seldom it is that we are afflicted by the things we anticipate. How much more often it is the unexpected which burdens us. Why then shall we over-burden today either by the expected

or the unexpected? Carry today's burdens only and you are stronger for tomorrow's burdens, whatever they turn out to be. If you carried yesterday's burdens only, you know how much stronger you are today. Sufficient unto the day are the burdens thereof. Sufficient unto the hour is the burden thereof.

God broke the years to hours and days,
That hour by hour
And day by day
Just going on a little way,
We might be able all along
To keep quite strong.
Should all the weights of life be laid
Across our shoulders and the future, rife
With woe and struggle, meet us face to face
At just one place,
We could not go.
Our feet would stop, and so
God lays a little on us every day.
And never, I believe, in all the way
Will burdens bear so deep
Or pathways lie so steep
But we can go if by God's power
We only bear the burden of the hour.

The happiness of today is all the happiness there is. We take pleasure in anticipation and in memory, but the real happiness is now. If we do not live and rejoice in it, we have lost it. How many happy days we lose by not actually sounding the depths of them at the time. It is a good thing for us to be reminded of how great are the depths over which we carelessly glide; how rich the hours which pass by us unheeded. How much beyond our possible appreciation is the bliss of that joy which abides in all genuine affection. Today is the day for

these things. As someone has said, "Life's greatest realities are here and now." How often our sorrows are bitter, not altogether in the separation from our loved ones, but in the thought of the many days during which we simply glided over the surface of our love and made no effort to sound its depths. We never realized how happy we were because we were thinking of something else and assuming too much, thinking of something that had been or was to be. When it is too late we remember the prize which we have had. Today it is not too late for today. This is the day the Lord hath made. Rejoice and be glad in it, in this passing instant of love and life. Do not put off this happiness of love nor the happiness of all the enlargements in the higher resources of life, from day to day or from year to year, until you get more time or more money. Such is a rainbow dream. People are continually breaking down before they reach the place where such a rainbow touches the earth.

How much of happiness we lose when we overlook the happiness possibilities in each day. We forget that tomorrow will be another today, when we shall still be making some grade, when we shall still be climbing some mount of perplexity. Shall we again miss the happiness possibilities of that day because our thoughts are being deflected from them by the lure of the future or by the regret of the past? Come back to today and let us ask if our thoughts are actually being deflected from the happiness possibilities of today, the things, the work, the people, the services, the books, the beauties of nature, the joy in the world, in our homes, in our friends. If we are missing these things today, how can we expect not to miss them in some future day?

"Now for work," says many a man. "Now for work alone; by and by there will be time and money for enjoyment." What a foolish mistake! Indeed it cannot be

described too severely. No man of common sense should make it. It may be that a man does not realize that every day in which he overlooks the happiness possibilities of life, he is losing the capacity for happiness. Plain fact that it is, he may not realize it. But he ought to see that the coming day for enjoyment may never come. Overwork may defeat it. A touch of apoplexy, a breakdown of the nervous system, a loss of health, and the happiness possibilities fall to zero.

There is indeed the work for today but is there not some happiness in the work? All work at times is a grind, but in all work there should be some point of satisfaction. After the day's work is over, is there not something still further to rejoice these wonderful minds and hearts of ours? There is something. It is there and needs but to be desired to be found. If it is not desired, it will not be found. Today is the day. If true satisfaction is put off, the chances are it will not be found. Today is the day the Lord hath made. We must not miss the happiness of today. Today is the accepted time. In this rushing life there is too much indifference to the present, too much looking forward to somewhere and sometime, when one can have things and enjoy them. It is a false philosophy of life. If you want joy in living, begin today to get it.

Almost everything depends upon where we center our thoughts and feelings. I can think of a household where a great burden is being carried. Life is a vast perplexity. The family, while not well-to-do, have the deepest affection for each other and so it is not difficult to see how they might rejoice and be glad, and yet on the other hand become hard, disunited and discouraged. The burden is there, and did they center their thoughts upon it and resent it they would indeed be miserable. The fact is, however, they have put themselves de-

votedly under it, each helping a little to lift it up, and they have centered their thoughts upon the happiness which they can give to each other in this trying time.

And so, perhaps, there will grow upon us all some sense of the importance of our attitudes of mind and upon the moods of action in which we greet the life and labor of each day. It is hard for everyone at times to make the grade. We ought to remember all the good things which we have ever heard or which we have ever tried to tell to others for their encouragement. But we must ever try to keep in mind the fundamental truth—we must live by the day. Live by the day, bear the burdens of each day, climb each day, make the grade each day. Keep heart and mind on the thing to be done, the step to be taken, the thing to be brought to pass, and the mount of perplexity and trial is eventually climbed.

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By

Rev. Charles G. Girelius

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It springs from truth alone, the truth we live
In act and thought."

—Alfred Noyes.

[No. 312]

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What Do Unitarians Believe Concerning the Salvation of Man?

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." Matthew 7: 21.

WHEN we consider conduct in the light of moral ideals we naturally experience a sense of imperfection. Moral ideals have a way of keeping themselves beyond the reach of conduct. Try as we will to make our lives good and true and strong and beautiful, the moral ideal still remains beyond our grasp. There is something about an ideal that we seem never to be able to reach.

There is nothing particularly mysterious about this fact. An ideal is beyond our reach because it is something that we consciously or unconsciously place beyond our reach. An ideal is a goal set for our attainment. An ideal is a conception of something that we judge to be perfect, or something that we have been taught to believe perfect. It is our vision of an achievement or a life supremely excellent. Usually our ideals stop short of perfection, but at least they represent something far better than what we are or have, and if by any chance we do reach an ideal, we proceed to set a new ideal and continue, if

we are in earnest, our unending pursuit after perfection.

We are therefore engaged in a tremendous undertaking, or in the words of Oliver Cromwell, quoted by Dr. L. P. Jacks, "We are upon an engagement very difficult."* To live just right, to do right in thought and word and deed, to use aright the powers and faculties given to us, to serve as we should our fellow-man and to give due reverence to God, to meet adequately the great challenge of life, is a rather large order. There is much to learn and to do. In the days when trades were learned in thorough painstaking fashion it usually took four years to learn a trade. While the trade was being learned, tools were abused, materials were spoiled and many of the results were anything but perfect. But to become a perfect moral being takes about a million years, more or less, and we have as yet been at the task only a very short time. We need not be discouraged. We are of course still doing a great deal of imperfect work, and we are far from the ultimate goal.

Viewing the obviously imperfect character of human morals, the traditional theology placed an undue emphasis upon this very natural state of affairs and proceeded to set forth a terrifying and unjustified doctrine of sin. It was assumed that God required of man from the very beginning a perfect obedience to moral law. Not the slightest violation of that law could be tolerated. Therefore the first violation, or sin, involved penalty, and the penalty

*From *The Challenge of Life*, by Dr. L. P. Jacks.

was death, alienation from God, exile from heaven and torment forever in the everlasting fires. Naturally the first individuals who attempted the stupendous task of living as moral beings failed, as have their successors ever since. In the story of Adam and Eve we have the account of the so-called "fall of man." Unitarians regard the story as a myth, but we need not dwell on that. There had to be a beginning of human beings, either by direct creation as the orthodox believe or by evolution as we believe, and the first parents may as well go by the names of Adam and Eve as any other. But the essential point is that in either case our first parents confronted the task of learning how to live a moral life. They were not perfect moral beings to start with. They were ignorant undeveloped creatures just beginning to think, beginning to see moral values, beginning to exercise freedom. They had become free souls "poised for mastery or mistake." They "fell" in the very first real attempt. You could not expect them to do anything else. They had to fall and rise, and they had to fall and rise a great many times as they kept on rising. They had to live and work and learn, just as an apprentice abuses tools, spoils materials and turns out poor results until he acquires skill.

But the traditional theology did not take this sensible view of the matter. According to its view, the first failure, the first sin, involved irrevocable consequences. The first man and woman and all their

descendants were doomed. They could not recover of themselves. Divine majesty had been so offended that God could not forgive the offence until the penalty had been exacted. But as the sin was infinite, being the violation of a divine law, the penalty was infinite, and man could not pay the penalty. Therefore an innocent being had to be found who could and would pay the penalty for man. The being who paid had to be infinite. God's Son, conceived of as God, thereupon took human form, and had to be sacrificed and slain as a victim in place of man. Then, if man by repentance and faith accepted Christ's sacrifice for himself, he could seek and obtain God's forgiveness and be restored to God's favor.

This is in brief the scheme of salvation as set forth in the traditional theology. There are variations of it that we need not go into. It is only fair to state that modern liberal orthodoxy has considerably modified the harsher features of the old theology. Fundamentalism still teaches it. Unitarianism repudiates the whole scheme. Our own Humanist group identifies this harsh and cruel theology with Christianity and insists that it is essentially Christianity. They are disposed therefore to repudiate the name Christianity and to say that Unitarians are not Christians. Many of our Fundamentalist friends agree with them on that point. Certainly, if the scheme of salvation I have described constitutes essential Christianity, Unitarians are not Christians.

Most Unitarians, however, insist that we are

Christians. Undoubtedly we are a part of the Christian movement. We hark back to the teachings of Jesus. We maintain that the traditional theology built on the fall of man, eternal punishment, and the blood atonement, does not belong to the teachings of Jesus. You do not find this theology in his Sermon on the Mount, nor do you find it in his Parables. It is simply not taught in the New Testament. Take the story of the Prodigal Son. There were the two sons. The elder stayed at home with his father. The younger went to a far country and squandered his money in riotous living until he found himself down and out. Then it was that he "came to himself," realized what a fool he had been, went back to his father and confessed his sin. He asked for no favor, but begged that he might become as a mere hired servant. The father, however, to the disgust of the elder brother, received the erring boy whole-heartedly, killed the fatted calf, and made a feast for him as an evidence of restored favor. Plainly the story was meant to illustrate God's attitude toward a sinner, and yet there is no reference in it to any supposed plan of salvation involving endless punishment and the need of a sacrificial victim. The father could forgive and did forgive, and that is all there is to it. "My son was dead," he said, "and is alive again; he was lost, and is found." The son had to take his medicine. He could not escape the evil results of his conduct. He had suffered starvation, disgrace and humiliation. His

money was gone, and his father would not and could not replace it. But the father's welcome was none the less cordial. There was every inducement offered to lead the son into a better life, and we may presume that in the end he became a wiser and a worthier man.

Thus in a simple and beautiful story Jesus taught the essential nature of man's salvation. There is no artificial scheme suggested, no elaborate theology, no sacrificial victim, no unnatural barrier preventing the father from freely forgiving an erring son and taking him back into the family circle. Jesus knew nothing about an elaborate theological scheme. That came later—centuries later, most of it. Jesus knew sinning and unhappy men and women and a loving Heavenly Father. He appealed to men and women to turn their minds toward God, declaring that God is free to receive, to forgive and to restore.

Unitarians do not deny the fact of sin, nor do they fail to recognize the terrible tragedies involved in sin. We have but to look about us and be convinced of that. Our courts and prisons are an evidence of it. There is misconduct on every hand. We look into our own lives and realize that we are far from perfect. Nor do we deny that sin involves penalty. The wrecked lives we see prove that. All of us as we look into our own lives recognize the fact that we suffer disappointments and failures as a result of misconduct. A moral failure means a maladjustment with nature, a lack of harmony with

our fellow-man, a disturbing sense of alienation from God, a weakening of the powers at our command.

But Unitarians do deny that any penalty or punishment for sin can be interminable. We reject as unphilosophical and untrue a doctrine of depravity that regards man as so "lost in sin" as to be naturally incapable of good. We deny that sin can be inherited. We may inherit weakened bodies and other results of the sins of our ancestors, but not their guilt. Unitarians cannot accept a theory of atonement that demands the shedding of innocent blood. Such an atonement is altogether unlovely, unthinkable, repellent. We cannot attribute to God a character that would require it. We could not love such a God as that. If God be great and generous and merciful and good He could not establish a moral law so rigid and so narrow that man's first offence, man's first groping blunder in an untried world, would mean the infliction of an eternal and irrevocable torment. We regard God as good and kind and loving and forgiving,—a God who will suffer us for our own good to endure corrective discipline but will not permit any to remain lost. In the words of Whittier,

> "The wrong that pains my soul below
> I dare not throne above;
> I know not of His hate, I know
> His goodness and His love."

Man needs salvation. We all agree on that, both orthodox and liberal. But we of liberal faith entertain a conception of salvation utterly different from

that of the orthodox. We regard sinning man not as depraved and ruined beyond the possibility of good, but as simply incomplete, imperfect, a being who has not yet "found himself," a being who has not yet realized the high possibilities of his nature but is still groping and stumbling after light and life. We have been born into a world that is filled with dangers and temptations and the allurements of ease and luxury. Money and fame and power dazzle our eyes. We have appetites and passions that contribute to happiness and good if rightly used but which tend to destroy us if we fail to control them. These are the natural and necessary conditions of free moral agency. Our world is what it is because man is making it. Our world is incomplete, and we are here to complete it. When we realize this we discover that man is not the poor, degraded, depraved and outcast creature that the old theology makes him. Man is gifted with a great nature. He has God-given powers wrapped up within him. He has all the qualities that fit him for mastery. He has been put in charge of the making of a world and the making of himself. The imperfect work that we see, the wreck and the ruin that too often lie scattered in man's trail, are the results of the unsuccessful and often careless efforts of his apprenticeship. But man is destined for mastery. Give man time, and God will trust him to "guard the cosmic gates."

Unitarianism therefore does not concern itself with saving a man's soul from an eternal torment in

another world, for that to us has no reality, but it does seek to save man from the weakness and the folly and the ignorance and the error that here and now threaten to prevent his rightly grasping and using the great gifts of life. Salvation means escape from the imperfect and the incomplete, the abandonment of selfishness, improvement on the work of our fathers, deliverance from sin actually committed by ourselves, making good whatever ruin has resulted from our folly, self-mastery and achievement, the making of character strong and pure and beautiful, and progress onward and upward forever.

There was a compelling urgency in the exhortations uttered by the evangelists of a past generation made possible by the terribly tragic alternatives with which they sought to awaken the conscience of their hearers,—Get right with God or suffer the unending fire! That was a cry that did carry conviction, and sinning men and women were converted. But the appeal has in our day largely lost its force, for it was based upon error and few now really believe it. The liberal comes with a truer and kindlier gospel but has not yet succeeded in uttering an appeal urgent enough to arrest the attention of great numbers. We can, in fact, not speak with the peculiar urgency of the evangelist who sincerely believes that an unconverted sinner is lost forever. We do not believe that the sinner is in any such danger as that. But we do have a very strong basis for appeal, and as truth is stronger than error we should make our

appeal stronger than the old. It is still true that "whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." We should therefore contemplate with serious concern the state of the man or woman who is careless of life, and who seeks satisfaction in the selfish and trivial instead of the beautiful and worthy and noble.

> "To every man there openeth
> A way, and ways, and a way,
> And the high soul climbs the high way,
> And the low soul gropes the low.
> And in between, on the misty flats,
> The rest drift to and fro."*

We believe that every one shall at last find the way into the Light Eternal. But, and here is a terribly solemn thought, the man who is careless of life must inevitably be condemned to travel a long and a tragic way before he finds the light. The serious thing is that he loses the life he now lives. It becomes the duty of those of us who have caught a vision of the way that leads toward the heights to appeal with earnestness to those who are traveling the low way. This is the one excuse for preaching, this is the supreme reason for maintaining a church, this is the impelling urgency that demands that we be zealous in the education of our children, this is the incentive to all social and humanitarian activities. Prompted by this consideration, we should be able to develop an evangelistic technique whereby our liberal gospel may arrest the attention of the world.

*From *A High Way and a Low,* by John Oxenham.

All of this our non-Unitarian friends will acknowledge to be good and true so far as it goes. But they will tell us that we have left out the Saviour. Orthodox Christianity makes Christ the very center of its plan of salvation, the mediator between God and man. But in the gospel according to liberalism who will do the work of saving? Our answer is that first of all each must be his own saviour. The Prodigal Son became his own saviour when he came to himself and went back to his father. Did not Jesus say, "He that doeth the truth cometh to the light"? But the erring one needs help also, good counsel, and the power of wholesome example; and there are many who are ready to aid him. They are the great and the good who bear witness to truth and righteousness, all who labor for the welfare of the unfortunate and for the progress of mankind, all prophets who are revealers of God's light and life. Among these we recognize Jesus as holding a lofty and unique place as one who has given to the world an inspiration and an impulse that have set men's feet in the way of life and turned men's minds and hearts toward truth and beauty and goodness.

Most vividly do I recall the words of an old hymn that became familiar during the days of my childhood and earlier manhood,—

"There is a fountain filled with blood
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood
Lose all their guilty stains."

We sang that hymn in all sincerity, and we were blessed in the singing, for the soul that earnestly reaches out after moral value and spiritual power does gain growth and progress, however crude be the symbol of his thinking. But Unitarianism knows nothing of a blood-filled fountain drawn from a Saviour's veins, and the New Testament does not know it. The symbol has become gruesome to us, and it does not exalt the character and the work of the Master. We are saved, not by the blood of Jesus, but by the life he lived, by the truth he taught, and by the light he kindled. Truly expressive of a Unitarian's faith are the nobler words of Theodore Parker's hymn to Jesus,—

"O thou great friend to all the sons of men,
Who once appeared in humblest guise below,
Sin to rebuke, to break the captive's chain,
And call thy brethren forth from want and woe!

"Yes: thou art still the life; thou art the way
The holiest know,—light, life, and way of heaven;
And they who dearest hope, and deepest pray,
Toil by the light, life, way which thou hast given."

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Are We Losing God?

By Rev. Palfrey Perkins

[No. 313]

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The righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.—
ROMANS 1:17.

It is certainly the most difficult task of human life to find the compromise between freedom and necessity, between the world's harsh reality and the ideal of an aspiring heart. What helps man to perform that task at least acceptably is the belief in God, in which that contradiction finds eternal solution, because He is the cause of all being and, at the same time, the accomplishment of all that ought to be. OTTO PFLEIDERER.

The real essence of every religious belief is the assurance that the true nature of reality reveals itself in that which I love and reverence as the highest and the best; it is the certainty that the good and the perfect, towards which the deepest yearning of my will is directed, forms the origin and goal of all things. FRIEDRICH PAULSEN.

Are We Losing God?

EVERY now and again the world is reminded by someone who speaks with authority, that men and women need a new concept of God. It is pointed out that as we go forward to new interpretations of the Universe, in terms of newly discovered facts, we must also go forward to new interpretations of God, in terms necessarily different from the terms so long held sacred by Christian people. We are reminded that an idea of God satisfactory to semi-barbarous Hebrews several thousand years ago, is naturally inadequate for a world which can no longer consider itself the center of the Universe, and out-of-date in a time which forbids us to think of God as a man-like, patriarchal King.

People who have been brought up in the ways of religious freedom, or who have brought themselves into those ways, are not particularly startled or disturbed by reminders like these. For a century and more, liberal religious thinkers have been making welcome, new thoughts of God. To change one's ideas of the Almighty seems pretty much a matter of course. On the other hand, conventional religious thought almost always finds these appeals for a new vision of God, distressing and disastrous. Pulpits ring with clamorous criticism delivered by outraged defenders of the faith, who are filled with horror at what seems to them blasphemous atheism. Nor is it unheard of that even scientists whom we always expect to find tolerant

and disinterested in their search for truth, are sometimes dogmatic and conventionally fearful, in their attitude toward radicalism in religion.

I have phrased the title of this sermon deliberately; not *Are we losing our concept of God?* but *Are we losing God?* because I wish to make a very particular point. First, however, let us think for a moment about the question—so clear to free thought and so startling to conventional orthodoxy—of losing our *concept* of God. How little thought it takes, unhampered by tradition or prejudice, to see that the statement "we need a new concept of God" is just a self-evident truth! *Of course* our idea of God changes, for an idea if it has life, grows, and if it grows, it changes. Of course we are losing concepts of God all the time. Of course we need a new vision of God.

True it is today, that great numbers of thoughtful people not only have no use for religion in any of its organized forms, but have no use for those intellectual concepts which we associate with religion. Gone entirely, for great numbers of thoughtful people, is the idea of God, an idea which is the essence of religious thought and the glory of religious living. The adjectives to apply to these people—most of them—are not "ignorant," or "stubborn," or "irreverent." No! We must call them "honest." It is not that they *want* to have done with the idea of God, but that they think, in loyalty to the truth, they *must*. You can see why. The reason is all summed up in two words,

New Knowledge: that which has characterized the last century as probably the greatest era in the history of the human mind. New Knowledge has made common property of a vast number of facts absolutely fatal to the old religious concepts. New Knowledge has uncovered to all eyes that will see, a world utterly incompatible with the idea of God, prevailing in and dominating Christian theology. Great numbers of people therefore, unable to believe in a God who is a super-natural being in the likeness of man, sitting far off from the world, conclude that there is no Divine Spirit at all in the universe. Unable to believe in the legend of folklore that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh, they conclude that there is no creative relation between the Infinite and the finite. Unable to believe in the ancient theories of man's fall, his natural depravity, and his redemption through the atonement of Jesus Christ, they conclude that there is no such thing as the human drama of moral and spiritual redemption. Unable to believe in a heaven of endless bliss and a hell of endless pain, they conclude that the human spirit has no immortal destiny. And the pity of it is, that most of these people literally do not know that in any progressive and liberal church today of whatever denomination, in any church worthy to be called a Church of the Living God, not one of these old ideas is believed or preached.

And so the atmosphere of doubt and denial hangs heavy about the lives of many honest, earnest, useful, men and

women. The wonder of life wakes in them no spiritual interpretation whatever, only a sheer materialistic reaction. The Mephistophelian spirit of denial dominates their thoughts. "No God, no God!" they cry.

Of course, that cry is no new thing. It is just an echo of an old cry. To take but one example, recall the classic utterance it found more than fifty years ago when at the first onset of Darwinism and Biblical Criticism, Matthew Arnold stood on Dover Beach at ebb-tide, and gave to his spirit of doubt and denial this expression:

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.
Ah, love! Let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain,
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight,
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

I come now to the point of my sermon, and strangely enough I find it embedded in this woeful wail of denial. I find it in the line "Ah, love! Let us be true to one another." I ask: Are we losing God? And I answer: Not so long as there exists in human beings, the capacity to be true to one another.

Why could not Matthew Arnold see the divine implication of human faithfulness and love? He must have known that what was true of him and his beloved, was true of all the race. And the race has sprung from nature —the source of all life—so at that source must abide the elemental forces which make possible human faithfulness and love. Sure of that, my friends, who can agree with the poet's conclusion, that the world "hath really, neither joy, nor love, nor light, nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain"? For it is no new philosophy, but rather the essence of all religion, to believe that what men love and reverence, what they know as the best in themselves and in their fellows, truly reflects the nature of reality. We may quote German philosophy, in Friedrich Paulsen's words: "The good and the perfect towards which the deepest yearning of my will is directed, is in itself both the origin and goal of all things"; or in Otto Pfleiderer's words: "God is the cause of all being and at the same time the accomplishment of all that ought to be." Or we may quote an English poet and mystic, Francis Thompson:

"O, nothing in this corporal earth of man,
That to the imminent heaven of his high soul
Responds with color and with shadow, can
Lack correlated greatness."

Here is one answer, by the way, for those who conclude, because of the constantly changing *conceptions* of God, that God, therefore, is only a creation of the mind, having no reality independent of the thought that thinks Him.

Are we losing God? No! One should speak in these high matters only from one's own experience. I can speak only out of mine. I cannot generalize. I will not dogmatize. But I know that there is a "best" in my life, inseparable from the origin and source of my life. I know in my own experience, something—shall I call it a quickening spirit within?—which lights anew hope's lamp, when it flickers and goes out; which encourages and stimulates me in the performance of my duty; which is with me at every cross-roads or divergence of paths, points out to me the better choice, and shows to me the rewards and satisfactions, missed perhaps by the world's eye; which companions me in my search for Truth and in my pursuit of Goodness. I *know* the presence of this spirit in my life. There are certain times when I am more aware of it than others. There are the times of common worship and friendly communion. There are the times when I am in contact through literature or art or through personal association, with great human beings. There are the times

when in the deep emotion of relationship with those nearest to me, I feel that this spirit is as real as that relationship, and very like it. There are the times of life's discipline in failure and disappointment, bereavement and pain, injustice and wrong, when this spirit works its spell of courage and healing and victory upon me. I cannot prove to you this presence within, but in the lives of other men and women I have seen what I take to be evidences of its Beauty and its Power within and over them. And I know that when I consciously lose touch with it, my moral and spiritual energy flags, and I have a sense of being adrift, rudderless and chartless upon the sea of life.

You see what I am talking about is only remotely connected, if at all, with any theological concepts of the past or with the religious experiences of any other men. Only you and I can know for ourselves about this quickening inner spirit. Are we losing God? In this sense, only you and I, as individuals, can answer that question.

Do you think you *have* lost God? Well, on the first unclouded night, go out and look into the sky, and wonder how by any purposeless and meaningless accident the stars could swing in their sovereign orbits, and

> "Around the ancient track march, rank on rank,
> The army of unalterable law."

Do you think you have lost God? Well, go to the library and read some story of a fine human life, some

record of great human achievement, or some expression in beauty and power of deep human insight, and wonder how by any "set of curious chances" this whirling congeries of suns and worlds, of forces and elements, could produce on one planet, a race with such spiritual possibilities; men and women with such ideals, such strength of conscience or such creative power.

Do you think you have lost God? Well, look at your trusted friend, at the dearest and nearest in your love's intimacy, at your own little baby, and wonder how love like that could be at home in your heart, if there were nothing, whatsoever to correspond with it, at home in the heart of Reality, whence came your own heart, your friend, your dearly beloved, and your little baby.

Have you lost God? No! Not while these "Bests" make up your life's treasure, for the best in you is God in you. Are we losing God? No! For the best in us is God in us.

Turn back in closing, to those of whom I spoke at the beginning "the great numbers of thoughtful people who not only have no use for religion in any of its organized forms, but have no use for those intellectual concepts which we associate with religion." Turn back to them and you will find prominently among them, men and women who may be called givers, rather than receivers of life. You will find prominently among them, teachers and physicians and scientists and nurses and social servants, a

band of selfless truth-seekers and health-givers, lifters, inspirers, and helpers of their fellow-men, whose lives make deep and lasting impressions upon the world's work and welfare. Many of them will tell you that they have lost God. And others will point at them and say, "Aha! Look at these fine spirits, these serviceable lives. What further proof do you need that religion is superfluous and unreal? For these splendid men and women have no religion; they have lost God."

But, my friends, that is not true. It may be a fact that they *think* they have lost God. But it certainly is not a fact that they *have* lost God, for they themselves are living witnesses of the only God we can know positively anything about! In them—in their hearts' fervor, in the ideals they strive toward, in the services they render, in the love they lavish—in them *is* God.

Let us put it this way.

We have lost the God who is a magnified man, the God of the "Divine Comedy" sitting far in the empyrean, in unchanging solitude and state.

We are losing—by the influence of the philosophic trend from a materialistic toward a spiritual interpretation—we are losing and we ought to lose, the God who is but a phantom personalization of a "stream of tendency," an unconscious force capable by some miracle, of producing intelligence and creative power and love.

We cannot lose the God who is with us—nay!—in us,

in all that is Truest and Holiest and Best; whose captaincy in the well-fought fight against all the hosts of evil, we delight to follow; who calls us ceaselessly to Righteousness, who strengthens us supremely in our quest for Goodness. We cannot lose that quickening, inner spirit of our lives, named—though the names be forever inadequate to hold such an infinitude of meaning—by the everlasting names, Light, Love, Life.

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Paul,
the Radical

By Ulysses G. B. Pierce, D.D.

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Paul, the Radical

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me."
Galatians 2:20.

THERE are few events in the religious history and experience of the race comparable to the conversion of Paul.

This looks like an extravagant statement, but if we will transfer the facts to some domain where our prejudices do not operate, we shall see that it is essentially true. Suppose for example, that in the realm of music, there had been a great person who was seized with an everlasting complex against certain musical forms and who was so sure that those forms of music were wicked and erroneous that he turned all his genius, all his education, all the tremendous power of his personality toward the extirpation of musicians in general, and that type of music in particular. Suppose that while he was journeying to a foreign city to swashbuckle and persecute the musicians there, he should see a great light or should hear a great symphony concert which happened to be in the form of his despised music, and suppose he should return to his hearth a champion of the forms of music which

he had previously detested and persecuted, and on the roll of the world's musicians should be ranked with the greatest composers. Then would not all lovers of music everywhere single out this incident as a typical instance of the power of music and its ability to adapt itself to the needs of the human race?

Now precisely that is what transpired in the conversion of Paul. Paul was a highly educated person. In the language of our day, he held degrees from the University of Tarsus. He moved in the best academic circles. He had heard of an upstart religion which flowed over the banks of traditional Judaism, which did away with forms and ceremonies, and which exalted the soul to the very limit and set men spiritually free. Of these things he had heard; of them he knew nothing. Forthwith, he determined to persecute the people who held these strange views, Christians they were called. Why? Why, if they were wrong, did he not just let them alone? If he had so much faith in God, could he not have said to himself, "If this is of God it will prove itself, and if it is not of God it will fall to the ground"? The reason Paul persecuted the Christians is exactly the same reason why any human being persecutes another. Simply because that somebody else has something he wants but does not know how to get! Paul had heard of the success of this new religion and thought it must be very bad. Being bad, it should be extirpated, and who

was better fitted to do that than Paul himself? So all his academic training, all his tremendous powers were directed toward extirpating this thing, and he started toward Damascus to burn up these people he had never seen, but who he knew looked at religion differently from what he did.

On his way to Damascus something snapped. Probably we shall never know what happened. The accounts of it, like the accounts of all psychological experiences, are highly figurative, more or less exaggerated, rather largely emotional, and do not agree among themselves. That is exactly what we ought to expect. It is exactly what we find in all questionnaires in which honest people describe their psychological experiences. The extreme materialists say Paul was epileptic and on the way to Damascus had a fit. Personally I do not take that very seriously. It is altogether too easy to have a fit, but it is not so easy to have your life radically transformed by a psychological experience. For Paul, from being a very respectable, conservative and very well-to-do traditionalist, becomes forthwith a thorough-going radical in the realm of religion.

Now, by radical, I do not, of course, mean a person who burns all his bridges behind him. If the bridges are behind us, why should we waste time burning them? True, we are through with them, but maybe somebody else would like to pass over them. Paul was not that kind of radical,

nor was he the kind of radical that seizes new ideas and tries to relate everything else to them. He became a radical because he began to dig at the very roots of things. That is what the word "radical" means—a man who can overlook the branches, blossoms, the myriad twigs, surface indications and debris, and dig down to the roots. That is the kind of radical Paul became. He became absolutely a changed man. The center of gravity of his life changed, the whole polarity of his personality was utterly altered. From that time forth he was not simply a modified traditionalist—that is, a man who accepts the traditions of his fathers so far as he likes them and those he does not like complains about. Not at all. His life was not so much amended as emended, thoroughly revolutionized.

Let us remember that Paul never saw Jesus in his life, and that furthermore at the time of his conversion there was no New Testament. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John had not been written. In reading the New Testament, we very naturally begin with Matthew and think that was the first book to be written. As a matter of fact, the oldest documents we have of the Christian faith are the letters of Paul. It has always seemed strange to me, personally, that the matter, for example, of the virgin birth, could be so very important, and Paul, the oldest historian of the Christian church, had never heard of it! It is not until you come to the mythical stories of the gospels that

these fairy stories appear. So here comes Paul, whose whole life is changed with no written gospel. This is what he does—he personally re-enacts the life of Christ; he re-enacts it in himself. "The life of Jesus," he says, "is my life. Was Jesus the son of God? I am a son of God; God revealed his son in me; that is, he brought me to a point where I perceived there is something in me besides the element of envy, hate, and persecution. God's son was born in me. The first Christ was born in the manger; this Christ is born in the manger of my human heart. Was Christ persecuted? So also have I been persecuted; read the record of it in the Acts. I know how to be hungry and I know how to be full. I can bear all things because of him that strengthenest me."

Is not that radical doctrine? It is, indeed. It does not simply touch the circumference here and there and say "Do not smoke so much," "Do not drink so much," and "Do not eat so much." Not at all. It goes to the very heart of the man and transforms him from the inside out, not from the outside in. "I," he says, "have been crucified with Christ. The crucifixion is not a thing which took place in Jerusalem only; I too have been crucified on the cross of all my prejudices and my complexes. Like Christ, I died. And did he rise again? Even so I arise again. I have been crucified with him and it is no longer the old Saul of Tarsus with me; it is Paul, the Radical; and

Christ lives in me, and now the life that I live in the flesh, I live by the faith, the faith that a son of God ought to have."

There are certain modifications that we naturally feel should be made to this conversion of Paul, and I have no hesitancy in making them. The first is that we must remember the temperament of Paul. We must remember that he was a Semite. The people in his part of the world, as every traveler knows, gesticulate more than we do. Their blood boils at a lower temperature. We have to make allowances for that. Undoubtedly things snapped more readily in Saul's mind than they would in the mind of Anglo Saxons like ourselves. Yet we have also to confess that we are not Anglo Saxons only, that there is an impassioned, Semitic, oriental and mystical element in all of us. It is true that the extremes to which Paul went in his experience would not come to many in our generation; yet the thing which it symbolizes does normally come to most of us.

The second thing that can be said in extenuation of Paul is that he had a single-track mind. Having a single-track mind, he said to himself: If these Christians are bad people, they should be put out of business; and if this is to be done, who is better qualified for the work than I? So without more ado, he went about it.

Most of us do not live that way. For example, how many of us realize that what the Bible says is literally true, that he that hateth his brother is

a murderer? Do we not think, on the whole, it is a rather painless adventure and harmless experiment to hate people? The enormity of it does not dawn upon us. We do not realize how wrong a thing it is for us to hate Catholic, Jew, Mohammedan, Hindu; we think it indicates superiority of our religion. We ought to learn something from Paul. The moment we hate people, that moment, ethically speaking, we begin to commit murder.

The change that came over Paul, I have described as a radical change, and it was a change from infantilism to maturity. Infantilism is the state of mind of the infant, who desires that all the currents of life shall be made to come toward and center in him. When he cries he expects everybody to come to his assistance; his mind is egocentric. This is all right in its place, but there is nothing more tragic in the world than to see an infant who has ceased to grow. So there are few things in the religious life more pathetic than men and women who are still in the infantile stage, always trying to coax and wheedle God to do something for them; crying in this language, calling through that ritual, messing the whole air up, and making the world unhappy trying to get God to do something for them. Paul realized this. "When I was a child," he says (this letter was written in his later life), "I thought as a child, I felt as a child, and I spoke as a child," and there are many things still remaining in Paul's epistles

to prove that he was right! If you do not believe it, read his letter to the Thessalonians; it was written in the childhood of his life. When he came to real manhood, he said, "Though I have all knowledge so that I can understand all things, but have not a charitable disposition, I am nothing," and the things in the religious life which remain are not communion, baptism, and regeneration; not at all; "There abideth faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love."

It is a hard thing for full-grown men and women to lay aside their infantilism, their childish difficulties and puerile behavior, and lift themselves into the realm of spiritual manhood. It is a hard matter and yet that is precisely what religion contemplates. Religion does not contemplate finding out what things in life you enjoy and then placing a taboo on them. If you enjoy dancing, religion does not say that is one thing in life you must not do because you get so much pleasure out of it! What religion contemplates is making your life over from within, so that from that time forth, whether you eat, drink, play cards, or dance, you do it as a mature religious person.

I have always been impressed with the story told in the Koran, about Mohammed, when he felt he was called to become the prophet of Allah. Of course this is a story. The Angel Gabriel came to Mohammed and transported him to a sacred well. When they came there the Angel Gabriel reached out his hand and took out the

heart of Mohammed and washed it in the well. After he had washed the heart, he filled it full of knowledge, full of courage, and then carefully placed it back in Mohammed's body. This is a beautiful story and literally true—literally true because religion contemplates not simply patching up our poor miserable lives and saying you must not do this and you must not do that, and making life miserable for us, but giving us a new heart and new mind and a new purpose. It strikes at the very center of what the psychologists call our libidos, our desires, and if we meet that right forthwith our whole life is purged.

There is no knowing, until you have tried it, how this works out in an individual life. What joy, what truth, what breadth and depth it brings to you! It takes you gradually but surely out of that realm of thought where religion is always couched in terms of the past tense,—God was, God spoke, God did,—and brings religion into the present tense,—God is, God speaks in me, God is here. It delivers us from the thralldom and dogmatism of seeing religion as a mere incident of life, a thing to be indulged in, if the weather is proper, for an hour once a week and the rest of the time we will have a good time. It delivers us from that and makes us understand that religion is a substance of our whole life. It leads us forever out of the realm of magic in religion into the realm of love, which is at once

natural, and because it is natural it is therefore spiritual.

Religion is tolerant and forgiving to us and overlooks without bitterness many of our infirmities, much of our crudity and childishness. All it asks is to be assured that we are on the way of growing out of the minds of babies into the spirits of men. The highest religious experience tends more and more to identify us with the very highest experience of the race, so that in our own terms and in our own fashion we answer back with Paul of many generations ago; "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me."

The Challenge to Youth of a Modern Religion

By REV. MINOT SIMONS, D. D.

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The Challenge to Youth of a Modern Religion

A GOOD deal has been said in recent years about the challenge of youth to the church. Since the war it has become plain that many of the things assumed without question by the church are now in the full light of questioning on the part of youth. Mere dogmatism does not receive the instant assent to which it has been accustomed. Mere tradition has lost the momentum which once carried it triumphantly along from one generation to another. With the release of many pent-up forces, both good and evil, the Great War certainly released youth from respect for the merely conventional. All things, including the sacred pronouncements of conventional religion, are now requested to show just cause why they should be respected. The new freedom is wholesome, but it implies added responsibilities. To equip youth with the spiritual capacity to meet these responsibilities, the church must reinterpret its past standards and make them carry a vital and compelling message.

It is now quite time, however, to realize that the challenge works both ways. There is a chal-

lenge to youth from a modern religion. Personally, I have for some time been weary of the soft humoring of what are supposed to be the unique and self-sufficient characteristics of modern youth. Some parents and some friends of youth are among the chief offenders in this matter. Moreover, I am tired of the fawning deference on the part of some religious leaders to what is assumed to be a unique endowment of wisdom in the youth of the present time. There is too much blarney and palaver in all this, too much obsequious flattery,—all bent toward securing some condescending attention on the part of youth to the claims of the church.

I do not believe that such an approach gets anywhere with youth today any more than it did in my day. Youth today is no different from the youth in my day,—no different from the youth in the dawning of the world. What is different is a difference in fashions of conduct. Since the war a new fashion in freedom has come. I remember that in my day there was a new freedom. Today's new freedom is much exaggerated by the psychological effects of the war, but youth itself is the same.

The one thing which has not changed is the nature of things. There has been no change since my youth nor since the youth of the world in the implications of the moral nature of man. Youth today must take the inspirations of moral idealism, or take the consequences. As always that is a fundamental alternative. Moreover, such idealism is most strongly vitalized when it is felt to repre-

sent the intention and purpose of a spiritual universe. That, too, is a truth of experience.

A modern religion begins its challenge right there, on the bedrock of moral realities. As a minister of a modern religion I have no deference to pay to any supposed unique endowment of wisdom on the part of present-day youth. I would say to youth,—you have got to learn as I had to learn, learn by experience, learn by teaching, learn by examples. You have got to see that the greatest satisfactions are found in obedience to moral idealism vitalized by religion. No one can see it for you, you must see it for yourself. You, yourself, have got to see that there is no just interpretation of life except in terms of life's best things. No pleasure philosophy, no sensuality, no place nor power, no material successes can for a moment give such inner satisfaction as the sense of living for good purposes, for the maintenance of integrity, for the preservation of self-approval. You of today are fortunate in living in a time when the native idealism of youth is given the spiritual freedom which it needs. It must be borne in upon you, however, that the greater freedom implies greater responsibilities. You have greater opportunities to use your freedom and likewise greater opportunities to abuse it. And again it is you, yourself, who must make the decisions which will use freedom wisely and effectively.

It is a confused time at present in the world of religion. There has never been so much interest in matters of religion, never so many books written and lectures given on religious subjects as to-

day. There is a greater freedom in criticism, but on the other hand there is a greater fear of the results of the criticism. Conservative reactions to criticism are taking place all over the world. This reaction is carrying much of the Christian world back to the Christian standards of the Middle Ages, back to all the futilities of formalism and creedalism. In much of Christendom, Roman Catholicism has enormously gained in strength. The Catholic party in the Church of England is the dominant party. In this country, the Catholic party in the Episcopal Church has greatly strengthened in influence. In the rest of Protestantism, Fundamentalism has had the last word in the recent controversies. The ears of youth are resounding with the tremendous commotion and noise of Fundamentalist fears, and the appeal of a modern religion will at present reach the ears of but a few of modern youth. Yet, they who have ears to hear will hear, and it will be the only appeal which they will hear with respect. The appeal will be a challenge as definite and unescapable as that of science, a challenge which will admit of no trifling because it emerges from the nature of things. A modern religion is not a matter of fancy and romance but a matter of spiritual principles indispensable to all moral idealism. A modern religion, that is, has its own dogmatisms. They are not arbitrary dogmatisms, however, but are expressions of spiritual realities.

What are the characteristics of a modern religion? They appear in the complete freedom from the bondage to all traditionalism. This does not

mean a freedom from traditionalism because some of the finest idealisms of life emerge from true and noble tradition. It is a freedom from any *bondage* to traditionalism because such bondage has ever been a blight upon the spiritual life of the world. A modern religion is free from all the dogmatisms of the past,—from all of them without exception. It is a freedom to prove all things and to hold fast to all that is good, that is, true. It is a freedom to be scientific as any science is free, a freedom to be philosophic as any philosophy is free,—that is, it is a freedom to make up one's own mind religiously according to the weight of testimony which can come from any direction and from any source. It is a freedom to believe what is reasonable and a freedom not to believe what is not reasonable. It is a glorious privilege, the hope of the world. As a minister of such a religion it is an inspiration to see youth flame up in noble eagerness, or at least to show faint flickers of enthusiasm, for such freedom while they are in our universities. But it is a disappointment to see so many drift back and down into indifference, or to drift back and down into the shape and fashion of all the conservatisms of the forefathers. Happily such a drifting back is not true of all youth else there would be no progress in the world.

With freedom a modern religion has developed a noble spirt of self-reliance. It rejoices in every triumph of science. It accepts the authority of science in the field of science but it does not propose to let science get out of its field and triumph

over religion in the field of religion. A modern religion represents a free and fresh and fearless interpretation of the universe in terms of a supreme, intelligent, Moral Purpose. And it directs its inspirations toward the fulfillment of the Divine Purpose in terms of the highest moral idealism. A mechanistic interpretation of life represents an arrested development in philosophy. It does not appreciate the common sense conclusions based upon the facts of our moral experience. Such scientists as Michael Pupin and Robert Andrews Millikan, whose minds are filled with the implications of our moral experience, come to the idealistic conclusions of common sense.

A modern religion brings to us the inspirations of the Divine Immanence.

By one great heart, the universe is stirred;
By its strong pulse, stars climb the darkening blue;
It throbs in each fresh sunset's changing hue,
And thrills through the low sweet song of every bird.

Moreover, it takes to itself the inspirations of "the sense of God in the soul of man." President King of Oberlin College once referred to "The will of God in the sense of duty." Duty is something due; hence it becomes a law in our moral life. It is such a law because it expresses the God-established moral nature of things. In other words duty represents for us a law of God. When we fulfill the duty, God's law is obeyed. "God is!" Emerson cried out. Back of your life and

mine is God's purpose for us and his expectation of us.

Youth must understand that, from the point of view of modern religion, science and religion are allies and not enemies. As Michael Pupin has said, "They are the terminals of the same Realities, one of which resides in the human soul and the other in the external world." Both can be friends and helpers if neither one tries to dominate or suppress the other. They represent experiences in different realms of reality. Science asks, "What is?" and religion asks, "What would better be?" Religion has the highest respect for the answers of science and science should have the highest respect for the answers of religion. Science says that man can live by bread, and religion says that man cannot live by bread alone, but by a trained and true mind, by a noble and brave heart, by aspirations for things honorable and useful, fraternal and sympathetic. Jesus declared that man cannot live by bread alone "but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God." That is, by every truth emerging from the Spiritual Reality of things. Look at the people who are trying to live by bread alone. Are they noble specimens of humanity? Are they the best representatives of what "would better be," of what the spiritual nature of man indicates as its true destiny? They are not.

A modern religion becomes, therefore, a spiritual dynamic at the very core of life. It is no longer interested in putting pressure upon the supernatural to make up for human weakness and

ignorance. It is not interested in many of the old functions of religion and it does not propose to be interpreted today in terms of those old functions. It recognizes the fact that man has discovered the way to meet his own needs and to make up for his own weakness and ignorance. Experiment, learn the truth, discover nature's laws and obey them, work with God and God works with you, start right yourself in order to get right results. Do not try to make any supernatural short cuts. Do not try to secure health by magic. Keep the city clean and obey the laws of health.

Many an old fossilized skeptic, still in some deep stratum of religious traditionalism, will cry out: "Why, then, religion at all, if it is not a unique way to put pressure upon the supernatural, to bring to pass something that otherwise would not be brought to pass, to keep out of Hell and to get into Heaven? Why religion at all?" The answer is that religion vitalizes moral idealism with the sense that such idealism expresses the will and purpose of God, that in the moral nature there is the one field for human development and highest attainment. Therein is the fulfillment of a divine destiny.

And modern religion directs its challenge very straight to the native moral idealism of youth. Be honest. Be honest with your own mind. Come to what you think is true in religion with such a passion for intellectual integrity that you will not be willing to say, "I believe," unless you can mean what you say and say what you mean. Let your imagination have free play with all beautiful and

inspiring figures of speech which will express religious aspirations in terms of poetry, but when you take a definite moral attitude in a moral universe, take it honestly. "I believe" are the most serious words you can utter. Say them honestly, or do not say them.

Be honest in the affairs of life. As a matter of fact there is no life on any other basis. In so far as one loses his moral integrity he loses his life. That fact sums up a volume of what might be said concerning things honest and honorable. Vitally is the will of God in this law of duty.

> When from the eyes the light has fled
> And truth departs and honor dies,
> The man is dead.

Be positive. A modern religion challenges you to get on the positive side of religious thought. Many people are saying today in their reaction from conventional religion, "I have no creed," as though that were saying something. There is no special credit to be given for such a remark. As a matter of fact it is really the utterance of a creed but of a poor one. Of course, one may be referring simply to the historic creeds. Our church has no such historic creed which it imposes upon its members. We are united by a Bond of Union, "In the love of truth and in the spirit of Jesus, we unite for the worship of God and the service of man." It is the statement of a moral and spiritual purpose. But while we have no fixed statement of church belief, each of us has a creed because every human being must believe some-

thing, and we have attained an astonishing unity of spirit because only in freedom is such unity possible. We all have our individual beliefs but they should be positive and our emphasis should be upon them. Truth is positive, life is positive, progress and development are positive. Negations alone do not help us to move ahead. And so, youth of the world, put your emphasis upon the positive things, the things which seem true and beautiful and promising, and such an emphasis will be a powerful influence moving you in the direction of the things you emphasize.

Pick out the essentials, and let no one persuade you to exaggerate the importance of the non-essentials. There is endless debate, about creeds, about this doctrine and that doctrine, about the importance of this or that in the practices of the church. But the value of the right spirit is more important than all these things put together. A few days ago Dr. Cadman said that the most important thing in Christianity is the spirit of Jesus. This has been the Unitarian proclamation for a hundred years. The things which cultivate and strengthen the Christian spirit are the essential things. There is a pitiful amount of fussiness in the administration of organized Christianity. There is endless waste of spiritual energy over the relatively unimportant, energy which should be devoted to saving the world from lying and stealing, from adultery and false witness, from the exploitation of the weak by the strong. A modern religion is looking to the youth of the world to put the emphasis in religion where it belongs.

A modern religion is a socialized religion. The old-time religion emphasized the fact that a man must be good, but the new-time religion emphasizes the fact that he must be good for something, something good for the world. The new-time religion is no longer interested in a mere individual salvation but in a social salvation. It is interested in saving and not in getting saved. It is looking forward not to a better world beyond this life but to a better world here in this life. And that is a challenge to youth which youth ought to hear gladly. It is native to the spirit of youth to be fraternal and friendly, just and generous, and a modern religion challenges you to carry such instincts throughout the labors of the world.

A modern religion meets the questionings of youth in terms of moral idealism. It answers the hard questions of youth in such terms. What is my life for? What can I do with it? What ought I to do with it? What will give me the greatest satisfaction? What must I put into life in order to get the most out of it? What is worth sacrifice? In one way or another, clearly or vaguely, these questions surge up. They cannot be suppressed. They emerge from the moral nature itself. Human destiny,—what is it,—a mere kindergarten experience of earth, or a continuous development of personality, a spiritual evolution that is perhaps timeless? Youth thinks on these things.

What is the young man's finest thought of woman? What is the young woman's finest thought of man? These finest thoughts are ideals.

Now look at them! Get them clearly in mind and then acknowledge that they cannot be betrayed by loose living and still remain the same. Acknowledge that if they are betrayed, satisfactions are lower, happiness is compromised, life is cheapened. Acknowledge that if they be kept, even at the cost of sacrifice, in due time they lead to deep happiness. Acknowledge the noblest realities of your being!

A modern religion appeals to youth to meet and answer life's questions from the point of view of the noblest ethical values. Interpret life in terms of such values. Think of religion as vitalizing these values with God's intention for us and his expectation of us. The inspirations of religion ought to charge life with moral integrity and with the beauty of holiness, that is, of wholeness. If not, it is a poor religion. If the historic creeds do not provide such inspirations they are not of this present day. The answer is,—they are not of this present day. Not one expresses the spirit of Jesus, the spirit of the Beatitudes, nor the spirit of the Golden Rule. Not one recalls us to a single life-teaching of Jesus. They are all speculative dogmatisms, pointing to life in the next world and not to life in this. They have played their part. But that does not mean that religion has played its part. On the contrary it means that religion can now come to its own as the spiritual dynamic in the moral and spiritual life. One can outgrow the creeds but one cannot outgrow the vital necessities of his moral and spiritual life.

Modern religion speaks without compromise about these vital necessities. Youth is challenged to live in a law-governed universe, a fact as plain in the moral as in the physical life. The fact reveals the intention of the Lawgiver. A little imagination will see the significance of that intention. A little imagination will show that as one tries to fulfill these vital necessities, he has taken the way and the truth of the religious life. It is God's universe of law and order. Keep the law, because it is a law of life. Do not depend upon any miracle or magic in the past, present or future. Rewards for obedience are sure,—in the field of obedience. Penalties for disobedience are sure,—in the field of disobedience. "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." As Paul said, "Be not deceived." Heaven and hell are results and are in us as effects from causes. When we look into the mirror of the soul and see that we have done that which was evil not only in the sight of the Most High but in the sight of our own most high thought, and when we say, "How could I do such a thing," we have had a tremendous revelation. It is a revelation of the meaning of humiliation, of the meaning of the soul's sincere longing that the evil had not been done, of the unescapable austerity of the Most High, of definite evil results from definite sinful causes, and then,—of the sense of God's expectation of us that we do better and again deserve divine approval. It is indeed a law-governed universe both within and without us, and we must be right with it because we shall always be in it. There is no proof that

one ever will or ever can die out of it. On the contrary it is more reasonable to believe that after death one will still be in it. The significance of the moral nature of man is an immortal significance. Man is immortal by nature. Consequently, the inspirations of a modern religion move us to seek freely and fearlessly, with hope and confidence, to be right with God's nature of things in this world and in all worlds.

A modern religion challenges youth to make up its mind about spiritual realities. The testimony is all about you and within you. If these spiritual things seem to be comparatively unimportant, go your way, and have no doubt that you will receive what is coming to you. If, on the other hand, they seem to have compelling worth, go their way, and have no doubt that you will receive what is coming to you.

Youth has intimations of the stress and strain and tragedy of life, and youth should feel that if and when they come to him, he must stand fast and true and strive with pluck and purpose to merit self-approval. The challenge of a modern religion is that one be spiritually prepared to do just that. One must, as a matter of fact, keep in spiritual condition in order to do just that. Many a youth has a sense of being handicapped in the presence of the more favored, handicapped with a sense of inferiority and of being unequal to the battle. Yet such youth, too, can make a fight of it with what he is and has, and thereby take no second place in his own sight to the more favored. A modern religion would challenge him to do just

that, because doing just that, doing one's best, is the Divine intention.

We all need to feel the inspirations "of doing just that." When we do our best we are right with God and that is all we can ever be, and that is all that can ever be required of us in order to be right with God. And unless a belief in the Virgin Birth, the physical resurrection of the body, the descent of Christ into Hell, his present seat at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, can help you, day by day, to do your best, it cannot help you at all! What must and can help is the recognition of the soul that, in the life of Jesus and of all Christ-like souls the divinely right thing has been done when duty calls, and that that must be what God himself has purposed to have done. Said Jesus, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord,—but he that doeth the will of my Father."

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